

Literary Transmissions and the Fate of a Topic

The Continental Spa in Post-1840 British, Russian and  
American Writing

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## Abstract of Thesis:

Around 1840 the Continental watering place took off as a destination of international appeal—and as a topic in an internationalizing print culture. My thesis, drawing on a broad range of theories of intertextuality, uses the case of the waters to model the farrago of transmissions, contacts and collisions that go into the making of a common-place in discourse. In particular I show how writing from multiple genres and national literatures helped establish the spa's identity as a deeply ambivalent locus of encounter—a venue that both tickled and deflated cosmopolitan ambition. Key points of reference include Dostoevskii's *The Gambler*, Edmund Yates's sensation novel *Black Sheep* (both 1867) and Henry James's spa fiction ('Eugene Pickering', *Roderick Hudson* and *Confidence*)—but also *Punch* and the Russian satirical journal *The Alarm Clock* (*Budilk'nik*), the travel writing of Joel Tyler Headley and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, and *Murray's Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*. The elaboration of a topic is above all an exercise in collective (if not concerted) sign-making; and like any potent sign, I suggest with reference to temporally outlying works of resort fiction by Bruce Chatwin, Mikhail Tsyarkin and W.G. Sebald, the nineteenth century's 'watering-place text' stubbornly refuses confinement to the age that produced it.

I, Benjamin Morgan, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.  
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has  
been indicated in the thesis.

Signature: 

Date: 

## Acknowledgments

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## A Note on the Text

In citing Russian (and occasionally French and German) works, I give the English followed by the original in parenthesis. All translations of quotations are mine unless indicated.

In transliterating Russian I use the Modified Library of Congress System. As a result, familiar names are sometimes rendered in unfamiliar ways (e.g. Tolstoi, not Tolstoy; Gogol', not Gogol).

[...] Description is  
Composed of a sight indifferent to the eye.

It is an expectation, a desire,  
A palm that rises up beyond the sea,

A little different from reality:  
The difference that we make in what we see.<sup>1</sup>

If any man has a right to feel proud of himself, and satisfied, surely it is I. For I have written about the Coliseum, and the gladiators, the martyrs, and the lions, and yet have never once used the phrase "butchered to make a Roman holiday." I am the only free white man of mature age, who has accomplished this since Byron originated the expression.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace Stevens, 'Description without Place', in *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (London: Faber & Faber, 1955), pp. 339-347 (p. 339).

<sup>2</sup> Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), intro. by Tom Quirk, notes by Guy Cardwell (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 207.



Baden-Baden, ca. 1890 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)



## Introduction: The Fate of A Topic—and the Expediency of the Spa

“Ella Maclane is dying to come to Baden-Baden. I wish you'd write to her. Her father and mother have got some idea in their heads; they think it's improper—what do you call it?—immoral.”<sup>3</sup>

Around 1840—Europe's bourgeois revolutions of 1848 interrupted the vogue but also laid the ground for its consolidation—the Continental watering place took off as both a destination of international appeal and as a topic in an internationalizing print culture. For stay-at-home readers as much as for those who went to take a cure, spa culture quickly became a known quantity, its salencies sketched in fiction and in many of the era's other defining popular narrative forms: travel writing, periodical journalism and the guide book.

The elaboration of a topic in discourse is an exercise in collective (if not concerted) sign making. This study, an analysis of how a ramifying print culture codified and transmitted the ideas that the second half of the nineteenth century got into its head about European spas, takes as part of its object concrete literary relations: what Dostoevskii's Roulettenburg (in *The Gambler*, 1867) owes to Thackeray's 'gay, wicked' Rougetnoirbourg (in *The Kickleburys on their Travels*, 1851), for example. But attending to the (trans)cultural production of space also means confronting that most nebulous of referents, *representational convention* (the staidness of the term threatens to obscure the farrago of contacts, misprisions and collisions—between the documentary and the fictive, the empirical and the rhetorical, past and present, memory and the imagination, the personal and the social—whose counterintuitive upshot is our significantly shared sense of the world).

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<sup>3</sup> Henry James, *Confidence*, ed. with an introduction by Herbert Ruhm (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1962), p. 27.

As the Maclanes' difficulties indicate, the fate of a place that becomes a common-place can be an ambivalent one. On one hand textual mediation (not to speak of the interminable bounce of re-mediation characteristic of an age of digests, miscellanies and copy-hungry provincial and colonial papers) is the antithesis of an exact science. Out of presumably similar reading material—magazine articles, perhaps, or letters from friends—Ella and her parents have conjectured two very different Baden-Badens—or made the same place mean different things. Yet as Francis Mulhern suggests, an unavoidable by-product of topicality is cliché—redeemable as a criterion of intelligibility:

A topic in old, strict usage is not merely what is spoken of—an object real or imagined: it is an established object of discussion with established terms of treatment. Thus, a topic is always already a convention, implying a settled relationship between those who participate in it. The most successful topics achieve the status of commonplaces, a metaphor we do well to take literally.<sup>4</sup>

Topic status is a condition of coherent discourse on a theme. But topic status also 'others' the object—not in the positive, aestheticizing sense of estrangement (*ostranenie*) first theorized by Viktor Shklovskii in 'Art as Technique' ('Iskusstvo kak priem', 1917), but, conversely, by precluding the intimacy and limpidity of perspective that the shock of the new can confer.

What sometimes passes for a *genius loci* is always more accurately an unruly complex of horizons beaten into narrative shape. But spa culture as it emerges from popular print culture in the second half of the nineteenth century also collocates difference in a manner that makes the watering place a particularly suggestive spatial analogue for the dialogic principle at work in and between texts. If any narrative, to cite Julia Kristeva's influential gloss of Bakhtin, can be read as an 'intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings', then resorts like Baden-Baden—'Europe's summer capital' was a commonly applied epithet—exhibit a comparable

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<sup>4</sup> *Culture/Metaculture* (London: Routledge, 2000), xiii.

capacity to gather (fleetingly) *human* material and to fashion social meanings out of the *mêlée*.<sup>5</sup>

Resorts would thus seem to lend themselves to the working-out of an intersubjective ethics.<sup>6</sup> And, undoubtedly, as transnational spaces in the age of the nation state, watering places performed vital narrative and ideological work on behalf of a range of literary communities, helping clarify their approaches to various species of other (see below). But, I suggest in the course of my attempt to map the complex of literary relations that installed the spa as a topic in discourse, nineteenth-century writing is usually readier to turn the narrative expedient represented by Baden-Baden to the service of chauvinistic and national-microcosmic discourses than cosmopolitan ones; and, in fiction in particular, spas are as often showgrounds for contestatory prejudice as they are proving grounds for experimental ethical scenarios.

Its potential problem-solving function in narratives notwithstanding, the watering place's functional inscrutability tested the elucidatory mettle of popular print culture. 'Pray, what do they *do* at the springs?', asked the American humorist John Godfrey Saxe, author of 'The Blind Men and The Elephant', about Saratoga Springs in another poem of and about divulgence (and written in the 1840s). The stanza continues:

The question is easy to ask;  
But to answer it *fully*, my dear,  
Were rather a serious task.<sup>7</sup>

A key thesis explored in this study involves the suggestion that, neither uncontroversially medical nor unabashedly recreational, spa culture at once instantiates the dominant social logic of industrial modernity and affronts some of industrial modernity's hegemonic interpretative codes—among them the

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<sup>5</sup> Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and the Novel', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 64-91 (p. 65).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> 'Song of Saratoga', *The Poems of John Godfrey Saxe* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868), pp. 142-143 (p. 142). My italics.

imperative to pass comprehensive, synoptic judgment. In other words, the spa is a fundamentally heterogeneous venue whose abiding essence it can at times seem to be the overriding rhetorical commission of nineteenth-century narratives to diagnose.

### Modernity *aux eaux*

‘[T]he diffusion of what may be called “bath literature” has attained proportions which are truly embarrassing’, admitted the physician and balneotherapy promoter J. Burney Yeo in 1886 in adding his latest offering to the pile.<sup>8</sup> In a rapidly ramifying field of discourse (John Stuart Mill wrote in ‘Civilization’ (1836) of a ‘reading age’, but the mid-nineteenth century was as definingly a *publishing* age: the cradle of today’s all-compassing, niche-excavating coverage), spa culture, and particularly Continental spa culture, was a unifying theme—at least during the summer season.<sup>9</sup> Fiction writers from Benjamin Disraeli (*Vivian Grey* (1827)) and the Russian Romantic novelist Aleksandr Vel’tman (*Erotida* (1835)) to the post-1840 writers who dominate this study—for the reason that, as I will maintain, resorts and resort narratives assume a new ideological and oneiric magnitude in urban modernity—sent protagonists abroad to the waters. Satirical organs—*Punch* and *Household Words* in London, *The Alarm Clock* (*Budil’nik*) in Petersburg and *The Dragonfly* (*Strekoza*) in Moscow—made fun of quacks, ‘blacklegs’, hypochondriacs and lax resort morality. In New York, both the serious, politically oriented *Harper’s Weekly* and its chatty, lifestyle-vending cousin *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* covered spa resorts, the latter publishing the rules of play for the gambling card game *trente-et-quarante* and itemizing Baden-Baden’s great and good (‘That blonde, dowdy and fleshy dowager countess from Saxe-Meiningen-Hildburg-Hansen...’).<sup>10</sup> Commercial

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<sup>8</sup> J. Burney Yeo, ‘English and Foreign Spas’, *The Nineteenth Century and After: A Monthly Review*, August 1886, p. 201.

<sup>9</sup> See John Stuart Mill, ‘Civilization’ (1836), in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. by J.M. Robson, 33 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963-1991), XVIII (1977), pp. 117-147 (p. 134).

<sup>10</sup> Unsigned, ‘Baden-Baden’, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 2 November 1872, pp. 852-3.

guide books, with the famous London firm of John Murray to the fore, dispensed advice on where and how most felicitously to take a cure.

A wonder of bourgeois civilization and a symbol of that civilization's reconsolidation after the revolutionary year of 1848, watering places accommodated many of the key convivial and spectacular loci of the modern public sphere: the café, the boulevard, the hotel, the casino, the theatre. From mid-century until the the *Spielverbot* of 1872 that outlawed gambling in a unified Germany (and imaginatively until long afterwards) spa culture stood, among other things, for a kind of urbane, sociable irruption upon the Byronic Romantic Rhine.

Watering-place narratives thus not infrequently have antipastoral undertones. Wilkie Collins's account in *Armada* of 'the opening of the season of eighteen hundred and thirty-two, at the Baths of Wildbad' is, though it narrates an arrival, elegiac in feeling:

The evening shadows were beginning to gather over the quiet little German town, and the diligence was expected every minute [...G]rouped snugly about the trim little square in front of the inn, appeared the towns-people in general, mixed here and there with the country people, in their quaint German costume, placidly expectant [...]—the men in short black jackets, tight black breeches, and three-cornered beaver hats; the women with their long light hair hanging in one thickly plaited tail behind them [...] the cool breeze that comes before sunset came fragrant here with the balsamic odour of the firs of the Black Forest.<sup>11</sup>

Collins's Wildbad models bygone Biedermeier sedateness and recalls the idealized rural landscapes of the German painter Andreas Achenbach (1815-1910) [see Fig. 1]. By 1866, the year of *Armada*'s publication, the *diligence* was in the throes of supersession and Continental resort culture was more habitually represented as the natural element of adventurers like Collins' well-travelled villainess, Lydia Gwilt.

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<sup>11</sup> Wilkie Collins, *Armada* (1866), intro. by John Sutherland (London: Penguin. 1995) p. 9.



Figure 1: Andreas Achenbach, *Westphalian Watermill* (*Westfälische Wassermühle*, 1863) (via Wikimedia Commons)

Spas were undoubtedly changing. The ‘crash course in modernization’ undertaken by central Europe’s *Kleinstaaterei* after the end of the Napoleonic wars had entailed, among other things, the secularization of land ownership.<sup>12</sup> This opened the way for the establishment at once-rustic watering places of modern rational-commercial facilities (hotels, large bathing establishments) and lucrative peripherals (race courses, admission-charging landscape gardens). By the 1850s more than thirty thousand foreigners a year visited Baden-Baden, a town of ‘about 6000 permanent Inhab’.<sup>13</sup> The resort’s thermal endowments no longer so exceeded water drinkers’ demand that the springs were used by townspeople to ‘scald their pigs [...] and save them the trouble of plucking their chickens’.<sup>14</sup> In Guy de Maupassant’s satirical novel *Mont Oriol* (1887), a small Auvergne watering place is transformed at violent speed into a profit-oriented concern (some early English translations append to Maupassant’s title the ironic subtitle *A Romance of the Auvergne*); less vividly, the—usually piecemeal—marketization of resort culture from around 1840 indexes the bedding-down in Europe of a full-blown culture of capitalism.

The railway, that great vector of capital, brought to Continental resorts a burgeoning international middle class increasingly possessed of the means and medicalized sensibility to partake in health tourism. As spas blared next to shaving brushes in guide-book advertisement inserts, resort businessmen cultivated relationships of patronage with the towns whose popularity undergirded their prosperity. The casino entrepreneurs Jacques and Édouard Bénazet at Baden-Baden and Francois and Louis Blanc at Bad Homburg bankrolled construction and cultural life beyond the gaming room, reinvesting their surpluses in new spa pavilions and other prestige projects.<sup>15</sup> Star cultural

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<sup>12</sup> See David Blackbourn. *History of Germany, 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> See ‘Fremden-Frequenz in Baden-Baden im ganzen und nach Nationalitäten, 1857’. Baden-Baden City Archive. (signature A26/29-171); *Murray’s Handbook for Belgium and the Rhine* (London: John Murray, 1852), p. 261.

<sup>14</sup> See *Murray’s Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* (London: John Murray, 1845), p. 548.

<sup>15</sup> ‘[T]o whose taste and enterprise does Baden owe so much? Bénazet, Bénazet, Bénazet, is on every lip. M. Bénazet built the theatre, decorated the rooms; is proprietor of the baths; engages singers; supplies the charities, and establishes the races. M. Bénazet cures the sick, amuses the ennuyés,

names were courted and poached for cachet's sake: Berlioz had a contract for the summer season at Baden-Baden; Offenbach performed annually at Bad Ems.<sup>16</sup> In Baden-Baden, the publisher (of Goethe among others) and magnate Johann Friedrich Cotta converted a monastery into the Badischer Hof, one of Europe's first modern hotels.<sup>17</sup> The fashionable Continental watering place of the 1860s comes close to burlesquing Roy Porter's observation that 'past cultures of health were complex performances [...] operating within a matrix of resources, institutions, amenities and physical buildings; and drawing upon elaborate rituals of regimen'.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, in an economic era paradoxically characterized by both the rise of mixed-use development (see Chapter 2) and the growth of functional specialization, spas specialized. Baden-Baden, recommended for conditions of respectable indulgence like gout and rheumatism, '[did] not appreciate syphilitic patients'.<sup>19</sup> Bad Kreuznach reveled in its reputation as 'the antiscrofulous spring'.<sup>20</sup> The Alpine resort of Interlaken offered treatment with goat's whey instead of water. In most cases—though apparently less so in *haute monde* haunts like Bad Ems—bathing and drinking were strictly regimented, as 'under the tutelage of the medical profession, the spa came to be seen not [...] as an independent means to a natural cure [but] as a centre for medical direction and expertise.'<sup>21</sup> As therapeutic practice increasingly became a locus of epistemological and social disciplining, so too did the typological persona of the respectable and admissible cure seeker; watering places, long associated with transient sociability and demographic mixedness, crystallize at and after mid-

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clothes the naked, and feeds the poor.' Charles Clarke, 'Continental Repose; Or, a Month's Relaxation', *Once a Week*, 28 November 1863, pp. 640-643 (p. 640).

<sup>16</sup> See Ian Bradley, *Water Music* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 91; 17.

<sup>17</sup> Siegfried Unseld, *Goethe and his Publishers*, trans. by Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 265.

<sup>18</sup> Roy Porter, 'Introduction' in *The Medical History of Waters and Spas*, ed. by Porter (London: Wellcome Institute, 1990), vii-xii (xii).

<sup>19</sup> Unsigned, 'Baden-Baden as a Health Resort', *British Medical Journal*, 23 April 1910, pp. 1003-1004.

<sup>20</sup> E.H. Sieveking, 'Remarks on the Employment of the Waters of Kreuznach'. *British Medical Journal*, 2 December 1853, pp. 1059-1063.

<sup>21</sup> Anne Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720-1911*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 212.



century an epochal (and frequently eroticized) concern for the question of *who was who*.

Situated at the crossroads of categories, discourses and practices, spa culture raises and involutes questions of identity and difference and helps lay bare interstitiality, interrelatedness and the (dissonant or hybridizing) co-existence of (ostensibly) mutually opposed social forms as integral characteristics of a wider cultural modernity. A history of the spa—‘a place of intersections: of social class and of ideas, of social and scientific concepts’, in Karl E. Wood’s terms—belongs equally to the broader histories of leisure, medicine, travel and tourism, geothermal science, boutique capitalism and superstition.<sup>22</sup> Resorts like Baden-Baden (‘romantic without being what fastidious Frenchmen call, *sauvage*’<sup>23</sup>) and Interlaken (‘not a town, nor yet the countryside’; ‘ne to gorod, ne to derevnia’) fall stubbornly between spatio-conceptual stools.<sup>24</sup> (In this sense they prefigure the idealized suburban ‘middle landscapes’ of late capitalism, which confirm bourgeois culture as a cult of balanced proportions.)<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, the cultural penetration of the water cure, an intuitive therapeutic form that increasingly came wrapped in argot, can convincingly be read as both a symptom of the scientization of discourses on health and as evidence of the endurance of syncretic approaches to healing. Finally, international resorts, far from London, St. Petersburg and New York but with reading rooms stocked with the current periodicals of all three metropolises, destabilize the binary distinction between interior and exterior space that underpins several important structural theories of culture. In doing so they can seem built to foster pathbreaking cultural and social formations.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Karl E. Wood, ‘Spa Culture and the Social History of Medicine in Germany’ (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Illinois at Chicago. 2004), vii.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Edward Dodd, *An Autumn Near the Rhine* (London: John Murray. 1821), p. 255.

<sup>24</sup> The quotations are from the English travel writer Charles Dodd and the Russian writer Vasilii Avenarius respectively. See Dodd, *An Autumn Near the Rhine*. (London: John Murray. 1821), p. 255; Avenarius, ‘Sovremennaia idilliia’ in *Brodiashchaia sil’: dve povesti* (St. Petersburg 1867), pp. 1-238 (p. 71).

<sup>25</sup> See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 116.

<sup>26</sup> Iurii Lotman calls this distinction ‘the beginning point for any culture’. Pierre Bourdieu makes a similar claim in his study of the Kabyle house. See Edna Andrews, *Conversations with Lotman: Cultural*

Yet the Continental spa, as I have already suggested, emerges from nineteenth-century writing as a deeply ambivalent locus of encounter—a venue that both tickles and deflates cosmopolitan dreams. Depending on the point of view of the beholder, spas *can* look like Kantian templates for global citizenship. Yet, and especially in fiction of the 1860s, they are more consistently depicted as national exclaves—*insular* in the strict sense. As reliably as *lieux communs* break down boundaries, they can breed resistance to the prospect and foster a redoubling of efforts toward distinction and delimitation.

This last, of course, need not be conceived of negatively—at least not from an aesthetic standpoint. ‘Where’, asks Henry James in his preface to the New York Edition of *Roderick Hudson* (first published 1875), a novel whose young protagonist’s progressive moral undoing in Europe is first intimated ‘in a note brief and dated Baden-Baden’, ‘for the complete expression of one’s subject, does a particular relation stop—giving way to some other not concerned in that expression?’<sup>27</sup> A tree-lined boulevard, a grand hotel, a picturesque ruin, the casino with its green baize tables and (with perplexing rarity) a bathing establishment: watering places, spatially formulaic, lend themselves to the trammeling of actions and relations whose resonances, James understands, end nowhere but whose circumscription is a dramatic imperative. A busy roster of industrial modernity’s cardinal social and literary types (the foreigner, the social climber, the ruined woman, the impostor, the proletarian) populates these settings, such *unheimlich* figures being the human *loci* of a duality that approaches the status of master trope in writing about Continental spas.

As dependable in watering-place narratives are the omissions and (near-) silences. As I have just suggested, popular nineteenth-century writing leaves us strikingly little (outside of promotional bumph) about the hydrotherapeutic process—drinking, bathing, fasting, purging—itself, with Mark Twain, surprisingly enough a true believer, providing (complete with illustrations [see Figs. 2 & 3])

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*Semiotics in Language, Literature and Cognition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p.33; Bourdieu, *Algeria 1960: Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

<sup>27</sup> James, *Roderick Hudson* (New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1907), p. 134; vii. Further references in parenthesis.

one of very few procedural accounts of bathing at Baden-Baden's Friedrichsbad and drinking in the *Trinkhalle*. But nor does popular narrative, for the most part, inquire into the work- and life-worlds of the hoteliers, innkeepers, shopkeepers, migratory hawkers and traders and (apparently) prostitutes who catered to an (exhaustively documented) elite crowd.

Finally, and in a related key, watering-place narratives offer very few details of the hedonism and self-abandon at which they so frequently hint (Freud, suggestively, borrowed the term *id*—*das Es*—from Georg Groddeck, the Baden-Baden physician and pioneer of psychosomatic medicine).<sup>28</sup> The snowball-like social axiom that there was something 'improper' and 'immoral' about spa culture was an idea among whose primary modes of discursive transmission were insinuation and innuendo ('[Y]ou know all about it and what one does—what one is liable to do' (135), writes Roderick Hudson, sheepishly, to his patron Rowland Mallet.)

I end this introductory discussion of the Continental watering place and its conceptual implication with modernity on a note of normative reflection. As I have already noted and will show in Chapters 5 and 6 in particular, a steady majority of nineteenth-century fiction texts with watering-place settings evince a distinct ambivalence about the scenarios of convergence and transaction that international resorts were usually represented as fostering. The spa fiction of Henry James, Thackeray and (less distinctly, despite his choosing to live at Baden-Baden for the better part of a decade) Ivan Turgenev is at least mildly affirmative about such comings-together (and, at worst, evinces amused toleration). But others among their contemporaries (the sensation novelist and journalist Edmund Yates, the Russian poet Petr Viazemskii and prose writer Vasilii Avenarius, both Frances and Anthony Trollope) put a distinctly negative and fearful complexion upon their watering-place others. The converse insight that intersections are both critically

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<sup>28</sup> See Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. by Joan Riviere, ed. by James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1962), p. 13.



Figure 2: In The Bath, *A Tramp Abroad* (via Project Gutenberg)



Figure 3: Testing The Coin, *A Tramp Abroad* (via Project Gutenberg). The *Trinkballe* attendant is biting, to check its authenticity, the coin with which Twain has paid for his glass of spring water.

and ethically productive underlies the discipline of comparative literature and drives my interest in resort narratives. Decentering authors, genres and national traditions, a study of the spa as a topic promises to uncover neglected affinities and spotlight contrasting attunements with respect to difference. But I hope it might also, in endorsing the spirit of the Anglo-Irish novelist Charles Lever's 1844 vision of international resorts as havens of 'frankness and freedom' and attending to the mood of squeamish self-assertion that envelops cosmopolitan possibility in many later narratives of watering-place encounter, serve as a mild reproach to High Victorian-era chauvinism's too-vivid twenty-first-century analogues.

### Parameters

The chapters that follow re-construct a heuristic object of study that I call, with several caveats (see below) the nineteenth century's watering-place text. I read across fiction, journalism and such popular-commercial narrative forms as the travel guide book, not from any interest in eliding their differences but out of regard (first) for their growing mutual implication in industrial modernity and (second) for the insight, derived from speech act theory, that 'poetic' as much as 'ordinary' language can exert illocutionary and perlocutionary force. Bakhtin's observation that the novel's formal proximity to other nodes in the field of discursive production allows it to 'exchange messages with other [types of] utterance [...] and to realize its own stylistic implications in a relationship with them' speaks to another convergence beyond those I have already invoked in this Introduction: that between literary and pragmatic narrative forms in the context of a socially mimetic aesthetics and an increasingly creative commerce. In practice such a rapprochement implies both fiction's increasing impregnation with realia and an enhanced reciprocal role for aesthetic praxis in the production of pragmatic knowledge about the world.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), pp. 259-422 (p. 274).

Although (or rather because) in the context of an ever ramifying field of textual circulation a topic in discourse has to be acknowledged as the epiphenomenon of an effectively interminable set of transmissions, I focus here, with only a couple of exceptions, on British, Russian and American writing about Continental resorts. I thus neglect or gloss over a number of obviously important and influential literary spa narratives, among them Jean Paul's *Dr. Katzenberger's Journey to the Baths* (*Dr. Katzenbergers Badereise*, 1809), Goethe's 'Marienbad Elegy' ('Marienbader Elegie', 1823), the French writer Edmond About's gambling yarn *Trente et quarante* (1859; translated into English as *Rouge et Noir: A Tale of Baden-Baden*, 1873), and two brilliant modernist studies of adultery, Theodor Fontane's novel *Effi Briest* (1896), which takes in Bad Ems, and Stefan Zweig's novella *Burning Secret* (*Brennendes Geheimnis*, 1913), set at the Austrian resorts of Semmering and Baden-bei-Wien. Such omissions reflect the need, in James's terms from the 1907 preface to *Roderick Hudson*, for critical narratives as much as artistic ones to 'draw [...] the circle within which [relations] happily appear to [stop]' (vii). But I would suggest that British, Russian and American writing on watering places is in any case of especial interest—primarily because these three major print cultures mount their hermeneutic approach to Continental resort culture (and to Continental Europe more generally) from positions of (sometimes cultivated) peripherality or non-conversance. Neither nineteenth-century German writing on German spas nor even French writing about Baden-Baden supplies a comparable sense of representation as a scene of revelation and discovery

### Towards a Watering-Place Text

As the chapters that follow attest, nineteenth-century narratives set at Continental watering places at once spin and depend from a thick web of representational codes, tropes and conventions. The mechanisms by which such signs are generated within and move between sign systems are the object of study

in what is variously known as intertextual theory, literary semiotics and poetics.<sup>30</sup> Such broadly structuralist approaches to literary transmissions are useful to the critic (despite the dubiousness of any claims they might make to analytic or descriptive totality) because they both encompass and offer the scope to look beyond those ‘aesthetic’ descriptors of textual relationships (parody, pastiche, caricature, travesty, allusion, imitation etc.) that are the stock-in-trade of literary criticism but which only adequately account for those commonalities between texts that are the product of deliberate agency. But structuralist approaches—such as the heuristic of a watering-place text—also require clarification and contextualization if they are not to be misleading or appear excessively prescriptive.

As Emily D. Johnson has shown, in the 1970s several members of Iurii Lotman’s Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics, most prominently the philologist and critic Vladimir Toporov, turned to the study of how the identities of places are constructed by the literary works that depict them. Among the fruits of this spatial turn in semiotic scholarship was Toporov’s theory of the ‘single St. Petersburg text’ (*edinyi Peterburgskii tekst*), upon which I model, with some caveats, the idea of a ‘watering-place text’.

In elaborating his theory in *The St. Petersburg Text in Russian Literature* (*Peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury*), Toporov drew on a book called *The Soul of St Petersburg* (*Dusha Peterburga*) by the early twentieth-century historian and author of excursion primers Nikolai Antsiferov. Following Antsiferov, Toporov emphasizes the importance of literary texts in establishing St. Petersburg’s cultural identity. But he complicates the relationship between St. Petersburg and the classic works of Russian literature that represent it. In literary topographies in the materialist mould, like *The Soul of St Petersburg*, likenesses in the way literary texts mediate their object (in this case, Russia’s imperial capital) are read as tributes to or reiterations of that object’s essential

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<sup>30</sup> ‘The subject of poetics is [...] not the text considered in its singularity (that is more appropriately the task of criticism), but [...] all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts [...]’ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 1. Further references are given in parenthesis in the body of the text.

characteristics. Antsiferov subscribes to the idea of a *genius loci* (in Russian, *dukh mestnosti* or *dukh mesta*) and his engagement with literary representations of his home city revolves around the linear question of ‘what literature can tell him about St. Petersburg’.<sup>31</sup> Toporov largely discards this charismatic conception of the city’s impact on texts in favour of a view of St. Petersburg itself as a dialectical phenomenon of ‘human communication.’<sup>32</sup>

Toporov demonstrates that St. Petersburg’s cultural identity can be viewed in terms of a ‘mythopoetic’ (*mifopoeticheskii*) dialogue between literary works (by Pushkin, Gogol’, Dostoevskii, Andrei Belyi etc.). Without seeking to dissolve the city in discourse—he is careful to refer to St. Petersburg in terms of a ‘nature-culture synthesis’ (*prirodno-kul’turnyi sintez*)—he shows Russia’s former capital to be the over-determined product of narratives as well as a potent force in them.<sup>33</sup>

Toporov’s ‘single St. Petersburg text’ is neither a ‘single’ text in the sense of speaking univocally nor a closed sign system that can be mastered. The theory is alive to the complex dialectics of text and context or, at a more abstract level, patterning and discontinuity, that drive the elaboration of a topic. Indeed, one of the key identifying features of Toporov’s St. Petersburg text is its striking capacity to generate antitheses. Yet, as Toporov further observes, readers and writers tend, in receptive and representational practice, to harmonize the conflicting elements of their semiotic inheritance:

St. Petersburg [frequently] emerges as a singular and self-sufficient object of artistic perception, as a kind of holistic unity [...] This is possible not least because the idea of ‘all-unity’ generates such an energetic field so strong that all “multiplicity”, everything “variegated”, everything individual and subjective is drawn in to it, subsumed and, as it were, transfigured by it into the flesh and spirit of the single text.

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<sup>31</sup>See Emily D. Johnson, *How St. Petersburg Learned to Study Itself: The Russian Idea of Kraevedenie* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2006), p. 201.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>33</sup> Vladimir Toporov, *Peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 2003), p. 28. Lotman too writes on the St. Petersburg text in ‘Simvolika Peterburga i problematiki semiotiki goroda,’ *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* 18, (1984): pp. 30-45.



[[...] Петербург [часто] выступает как особый и самодовлеющий объект художественного постижения, как некое целостное единство [...] это становится возможным не в последнюю очередь потому, что обозначенное „цельно-единство“ создает столь сильное энергетическое поле, что все „множество-различное“, „пестрое“, индивидуально-оценочное вовлекается в это поле, охватывается им и как бы пресуществляется в нем в плоть и дух единого текста [...]].<sup>34</sup>

Much recent writing on the ‘city text’, following Derrida rather than Toporov, stresses the uncontainability of its object (‘London is diverse, rich and strange, estranging and alien; real and yet hyperreal, babbling and yet ineffable, apocalyptic and yet also banal, quotidian *and* exotic at one and the same time’).<sup>35</sup> Yet the suggestion that the *identity* (the term, after all, signifies) of a place is more likely to manifest as a singularity than a superfluity at the point of apperception and/or ‘actualization’ is an intuitively persuasive one, especially in the context of what Miriam Bailin, following a line of discussion opened up by Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, has characterized as ‘the stringency of the Victorian standard for univocal feeling’.<sup>36</sup>

A shortcoming, perhaps, of Toporov’s theory is that, rather as Antsiferov placed too high a value on the intrinsic genius of the city founded by Peter the Great, he himself aggrandizes the place-making role of *literary* genius and underestimates the topo-graphic part played by reaction, accommodation and inadvertency. A classic variant of intertextual dialectic, which *The St. Petersburg Text in Russian Literature* does not touch upon but whose significance is brought out by attention to the nineteenth-century’s watering-place text, involves the sociological phenomenon commonly known as backlash. The profound

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<sup>34</sup> Toporov, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> See Julian Wolfreys. *Writing London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave. 1998), p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Actualization’ is Wolfgang Iser’s term for the process by which an ideal reader ‘finishes’ the meaning of a text. See Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 26. See also Miriam Bailin, “Dismal Pleasure”: Victorian Sentimentality and the Pathos of the Parvenu’, *English Literary History*, 66, (1999), 1015-1032 (p. 1021); and Ermarth, *Realism and Consensus in the Victorian Novel*.

skepticism about the water cure that (as I show in Chapter 2) characterizes nineteenth-century periodical journalism on the subject of spas can plausibly be read as a quasi-organic counterpoint to the decades-long hard sell undertaken by commercially interested parties. Dr. Augustus Bozzi Granville's *The Spas of Germany* (1837), an uncomfortable blend of obscurantist jargon ('mineral waters [...] may [...] be considered as "resolvents" as well as alteratives'), proto-Smilesian success stories ('Herr Berchtold now walks as straight and upright as if nothing had happened') and guide-book pragmatics ('The whole distance from Baden to Stuttgart (*sic*) [...] may be accomplished easily in a summer's day') exemplifies a kind of pabulum that could almost have been designed to provoke the corrective mirth of *Punch* and *Household Words*.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, the tedious insistence of received wisdom can also foster a kind of exasperated acquiescence. '[S]ays the reader, you haven't said a word yet about the gaming tables', writes the American journalist Carl Benson (Charles Astor Bristed) in an 1866 article on Baden-Baden, simultaneously pointing up his own article's status as the latest term in a series and demonstrating his competence as a reader-interpreter of that series.<sup>38</sup> Benson's piece evinces an irritable consciousness ('[I]f you expect me to let off some highly moral reflections on the sin and stupidity of gambling, I shan't do it; I should as soon think of elaborating an essay to prove that fire will burn') of what Hans Robert Jauss would later characterize as representational praxis's conditioning by a 'horizon of expectations':

A literary work, even when it appears to be new, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of that which was already read [and] brings the reader to a specific emotional attitude.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Granville, *The Spas of Germany*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1837), 1, xxxvi; pp. 123; 93.

<sup>38</sup> Carl Benson, 'Baden-Baden', *Galaxy*, 15 July 1866, pp. 519-524 (p. 524).

<sup>39</sup> *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 23.

The ‘specific emotional attitude’ advertised in this case—and Jauss’s reception theory seems especially suggestive when we keep in mind that writers are also, and perhaps above all, *readers*—is one of wary resistance. Yet Benson *treats the theme* (albeit by way of an extended apophasis), the distinction between loudly abhorring convention and bowing to it not always being easy to observe.

Any place ‘text’, then—indeed, any topic in discourse—is probably best read as the redaction of multiple shades of desire and compulsion. On the one hand, Kristeva’s work on intertextuality talks up the agency and relative autonomy of the individual talent in the face of tradition (though Kristeva would surely reject T.S. Eliot’s terms):

[H]istory and society [...] are [...] texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them [...] The word’s status is thus defined *horizontally* (the words in the text belong to both writing subject and addressee) as well as *vertically* (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus).<sup>40</sup>

The above passage suggests the metaphor of a kind of intertextual federation, in which individual authors wield executive authority (albeit provisional and strictly delimited by statute) over a topic at least for as long as it remains in their jurisdiction (i.e. as they ‘rewrite’ the text). But in a well-known passage, Bakhtin, upon whose dialogic theory Kristeva’s formative essay on intertextuality builds, appears less optimistic about the prospect of those who discourse on a theme (or a place) mastering the thicket of prior mediation and retaining even a limited ownership of the topic:

The direct word, as traditional stylistics understands it, encounters in its orientation toward the object only the resistance of the object itself (the impossibility of its being exhausted by a word, the impossibility of saying it all) [...] But no living word relates to its object in a *singular* way. Between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same

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<sup>40</sup> ‘Word, Dialogue and the Novel’, pp. 65-66.

theme, and this is an environment that it is often difficult to penetrate [Any] concrete discourse finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist – or, on the contrary, by the ‘light’ of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed towards its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the most systematic effort to steer a pragmatic and schematic course through the field of intertextual relations is that undertaken by the French narratologist Gérard Genette in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (*Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, 1982; translated into English, 1997). Genette identifies five principal species of literary transmission or ‘transtextual’ relationship: (1) intertextuality, which he (confusingly) defines much more restrictively than Kristeva as ‘the actual presence of one text within another’ (e.g. quotation or direct allusion); (2) paratextuality, describing the relations between a text and the textual elements that frame it (e.g. title, preface, epigraph); (3) metatextuality, which refers to one text’s ‘commentary’ upon another; (4) hypertextuality – the rewriting of a ‘hypotext’ (e.g. *The Odyssey*) by its ‘hypertext’ (e.g. Joyce’s *Ulysses*); and (5) architextuality, a relation that is usually ‘completely silent’ and which describes a text’s obedience or otherwise to narrative codes and conventions (a work describing itself as a novel always enacts an implicit relationship to previous works describing themselves as such).<sup>42</sup>

Genette’s schema is of some use in anatomizing the nineteenth-century’s watering-place text (which, I suggest in Chapter 4, ranges tentacularly well beyond the borders of the nineteenth century). The tourist guide books published

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<sup>41</sup>Bakhtin, ‘Discourse in the Novel’, p. 276.

<sup>42</sup> See Genette, *Palimpsests*, pp. 1-5.

by John Murray from the 1830s are heavily ‘intertextual’ (in Genette’s sense of the term), using direct quotations from Byron and Southey to promote the water resorts of the Rhine. Violet Hunt’s evocation of Thackeray’s spa fiction in her 1913 travelogue *The Desirable Alien at Home and in Germany* (‘Thackeray skilfully cast around [...] German thermal springs that vague aroma of *dévergondage*, that intimate flavour of impropriety, of possible scabrous adventure, which appeals so deeply and intimately to the middle-class for which he catered’) is a good example of engaged metatextual commentary.<sup>43</sup> Bruce Chatwin and Leonid Tsygkin’s self-conscious late twentieth-century re-inscriptions of nineteenth-century myths about resort culture—discussed in Chapter 4—contain both hypertextual and metatextual elements.

But Genette’s schema, preoccupied with the conscious tributes paid by one text to another, hardly attends to Bakhtin’s sense of the intertextual field as an ‘elastic [...] entangled [...] tension-filled environment of alien words’. *Palimpsests*’ most intriguing analytic category is, perhaps unsurprisingly, its least well defined: ‘architextuality’. Thackeray’s choice of Rougetnoirbourg as a satirical toponym for Baden-Baden in *The Kickleburys on the Rhine* (1851) and the Maclanes’ ideas about Baden-Baden in James’s *Confidence* all raise issues of transmission pertaining to the Continental spa’s reputation in cultural discourse at quite a high level of abstraction and generality; they register, in Violet Hunt’s terms, a ‘vague’ but unmissable ‘aroma’. The chapters that follow represent an attempt, ventured without aspiration to analytic closure, to flesh out Hunt’s sensate phrasing and to put a pragmatic complexion on Genette’s notion of architextuality.

## Summary and Chapter Outline

To sum up, this thesis attempts to integrate three main lines of argument, at three different—but overlapping—levels of abstraction.

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<sup>43</sup> Hunt, *The Desirable Alien at Home and in Germany*, preface and two additional chapters by Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford) (London: Chatto & Windus, 1913), p. 96.

Firstly, and concretely, I suggest that, rather than the watering place's status as a transnational topic after 1840 being simply the reflection of a transcultural vogue for hydrotherapy, the Continental spa does important and specific ideological and narrative work in realist fiction and print journalism (representational forms which, despite their contrasting epistemological allegiances, enacted an unprecedented mutuality in the period as exegetes of the 'unperceived field'). Between them, I suggest, and with the input of other nodes in a ramifying field of discourse (such as the travel memoir and the guide book), fiction and journalism played a major part in producing the modern water resort as a cultural and spatial form. The basis of the Continental spa's appeal to the print culture of industrial modernity might be glossed as follows: (a) watering places compress and (apparently) simplify modern urban(e) sociability, allowing it to be drawn coherently and with a semblance of totality; (b) spas deracinate the traveler, casting him, moreover, into a kind of 'no-man's land'—a significantly equivocal, 'travelee-less' space—and thus offer themselves as 'hygienic' and, importantly, delimited *loci* of encounter; and (c) resort culture gathers diverse discourses, categories and practices, allowing a wide range of intersubjective and developmental dilemmas of topical concern (international and inter-class encounter, the problem of a rationalized leisure, the trammelling of nature by capital, the medicalization of health, an inchoate 'society of the spectacle') to be problematized and their interrelationships brought into relief. The spa is thus a signifier that to a significant extent *points away from itself*. Yet the Continental watering place as it emerges from post-1840 popular print discourse is also a highly distinctive socio-spatial form—one which, in its interstitiality and functional heterogeneity, both embodies the social logics of industrial modernity and affronts some of industrial modernity's hegemonic interpretative codes (which are significantly synoptic and diagnostic-evaluative).

Second, and drawn for the most part implicitly, is a metacritical argument. Starting from the insight that common-places (cf. Mary Louise Pratt's 'contact zones', Bhabha's 'cultural interstices') are ethically and critically productive and that the hermeneutic generativeness of boundaries is a foundational insight for the field of comparative literature, I offer the Continental spa in post-1840

popular print culture as a compound common(-)place: both a nexus of literary cultures and a 'topic' with established terms of treatment. (The spa's productivity as a critical *Sammelpunkt* stands in contrast to the failure, discussed in Chapter 5, of resorts as a transnational common-places to generate cosmopolitan discourses in the Kantian—or Derridean—spirit.)

Third, in elaborating the heuristic of a 'spa text' on the basis of Kristevan, Toporovan and Genettian intertextual theory, my thesis foregrounds the production of space as a phenomenon of textual relations. Attention to the web of transmissions and contacts underlying a redoubtable set of resort 'plot patterns' and rhetorical formulae both enriches and complicates an understanding of the 'metaleptic' processes by which writing simultaneously 'creates' and 'reveals' social space.

**Chapter 1** sketches the broader topo-graphical (in the etymologically 'literal' sense, as in the English 'topographical poetry' of the eighteenth century) contexts that shaped nineteenth-century literary responses to the Continental spa. I attend first to domestic traditions of writing about domestic watering places (e.g. Bath in England, Piatigorsk in Russia and Saratoga in the United States) and then to the epistemological paradox of the (broadly 'realist') ambition to realize narrative settings both 'in full' and to a high degree of complexity.

**Chapter 2** traces the recurrence of the trope of duality in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing about Continental spas, suggesting that the watering place, a functionally ambivalent space, piqued nineteenth-century print culture's fascination with latency and its disclosure.

**Chapter 3** takes as its starting point the demonic motifs that abound in both fictional and journalistic accounts of watering places. I propose eschatological allegory as a vital interpretative and didactic touchstone in ethical narratives, including Tolstoi's *Family Happiness* (*Semeinoe schast'e*, 1858) and Anthony Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864-65), both set partly at Baden-Baden. I then contrast such writing with two resort-set exercises in modernist bafflement: Dostoevskii's *The Gambler* (*Igrok*, 1867) and Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915).

**Chapter 4** describes how print culture first installed the Continental spa as a topic in discourse (with the synoptic poetics of the travel guide book a profound tonal influence) and then registered the psychic and narrative implications of hypermediation. Through readings of temporally outlying works of spa fiction by W.G. Sebald, Bruce Chatwin and Leonid Tsypkin, I further suggest that, like any potent cluster of signs, the nineteenth century's watering-place text stubbornly refuses confinement to the age that produced it.

**Chapter 5** discusses the Continental spa as a venue in which mid-nineteenth century narratives dramatize encounters with the foreign. International resorts can look like exemplary cosmopolitan spaces in the context of an increasingly fractious diplomatic atmosphere. Yet as I note in the course of a reading of Yates's sensation novel *Black Sheep*, spa-set fiction frequently reflects—and even nourishes—chauvinistic discourses on nationality and identity.

**Chapter 6**, extending my engagement with nineteenth-century fiction as the venue for an ambivalent intersubjective ethics, approaches the watering place as a scene of class threat. I first analyse the representation in spa narratives of two of industrial modernity's defining social archetypes: the proletarian and the parvenu. I then undertake an extended reading of Frances Trollope's picaresque satire *The Robertses on their Travels* (1846), which represents Baden-Baden as the front line in a struggle against legitimate culture's permeation by undesirable elements (and, arguably, against the dilution of upper-bourgeois advantage).

Finally, my **Conclusion** reflects on the critical utility of common-places and the 'metaleptic' relationship between narrative and social space.



## **Chapter 1**

Getting There  
Topographical Contexts

Baden-Baden is the Saratoga of Germany [...]<sup>1</sup>

Saratoga [...] is the Baden-Baden of America.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. John Philip Newman ('Evangeline'), *European Leaflets for Young Ladies* (New York: John F. Baldwin, 1862), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Clara Bromley, *A Woman's Wanderings in the Western World* (London: Saunders, Otley and Co., 1861), p. 68.

‘We wanted something thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign—foreign from top to bottom—foreign from centre to circumference—foreign inside and out and all around—nothing any where about it to dilute its foreignness’, hyperbolizes Mark Twain in *The Innocents Abroad*, his 1869 account of a journey through Europe and the Holy Land onboard the steamship *Quaker City*. Thirty pages later—in Paris—he has changed his tune: ‘At eleven o’ clock we alighted upon a sign which manifestly referred to billiards. Joy!’<sup>3</sup>

As Twain’s comic self-exposé illustrates, encounters with the new are ambivalently mediated by the already-known from the point of view of both expectation and desire. Accordingly, this chapter sketches the topographical (in the term’s etymological sense: *topos* = place + *grafein* = to write) contexts that conditioned post-1840 British, Russian and American literary approaches to and exegeses of the novel topic of Continental resort culture. I begin with a survey of literary representations of *domestic* watering places in the three countries, before proceeding to a more general examination of mid-century literary trends in the rendering of narrative space.

My analysis is inevitably reductive. The nineteenth century’s transnational discourse on places like Baden-Baden is informed by and overlaps with many more related discourses (on foreign travel, on work and leisure, on health etc.) than are covered in detail below. Moreover, the question of the relationships between the three domestic topographical traditions I evoke below and writing about foreign resorts is far from straightforward. Nonetheless, as the epigraph to this chapter suggests, the semiotic complex that installed Continental spa as a topic in discourse ran to a significant degree on the motor of equivalence and comparison. Moreover, many of the tropes that identify the nineteenth century’s *Continental*-resort text—including the idea of watering places as spatial proxies for the metropolis—surfaced first in domestic spa narratives. Motifs of simulation, artifice, transgression, encounter, deracination and disappointed expectation are characteristic of fiction about Bath, Saratoga and Piatigorsk, as they are of writing about Baden-Baden and Homburg; although, since the two

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<sup>3</sup>*The Innocents Abroad*, pp. 50; 80.

strands interlace significantly after mid-century, any attempt to map their relations in terms of precursorship and descendancy risks dizziness.

As for the wider topographical contexts, my main concern is to mark a number of the tensions that conditioned the mid-nineteenth century's production of narrative space. In particular, I try to register two kinds of stress inevitably borne by conscientious writing in the realist mode: between the (sometimes conflicting) imperatives to represent settings as the products of human activity *and* as arbiters of human outcomes; and between a sense of responsibility to pass synoptic, ethically inflected judgment and a desire to do justice to the complexity of socio-spatial experience in modernity.

### 'Why are we all here?': The Caucasian Spa in Russian Literature of the Nineteenth Century

First, an irony. As the water cure truly took off in the Russian empire, fiction writers began to look abroad when representing it. The Caucasian or southern spa is an important setting in Russian literature of the early and middle nineteenth century. Sublimely situated yet easy to populate with a recognizable elite cast, resorts like Piatigorsk [see fig. 4] and Kislovodsk offered a logical second home for the Russian society tale (*svetskaia povest'*). Yet hydrotherapy emerged as a popular medical phenomenon—rather than an elite leisure pastime—only after 1860. In the 1870s and 1880s candidates for medical degrees at St. Petersburg University wrote dissertations on such topics as 'The Effect on Blood Pressure of Baths and Showers at Different Temperatures', describing the results of douching experiments on livestock and large dogs.<sup>4</sup> By the 1890s almost every southern town of note—not just Piatigorsk and Kislovodsk but Slaviansk and Borzhom (present-day Borzhomi) offered spa bathing or drinking facilities.

Yet with these innovations came complaints about how Russian 'underdevelopment and ignorance' ('nasha men'shaia zazhitochnost' i

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Petr Revnov, 'O vliianii vann i oblivanii razlichnoi temperatury na krovianoe davlenie' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, St. Petersburg University, 1876).

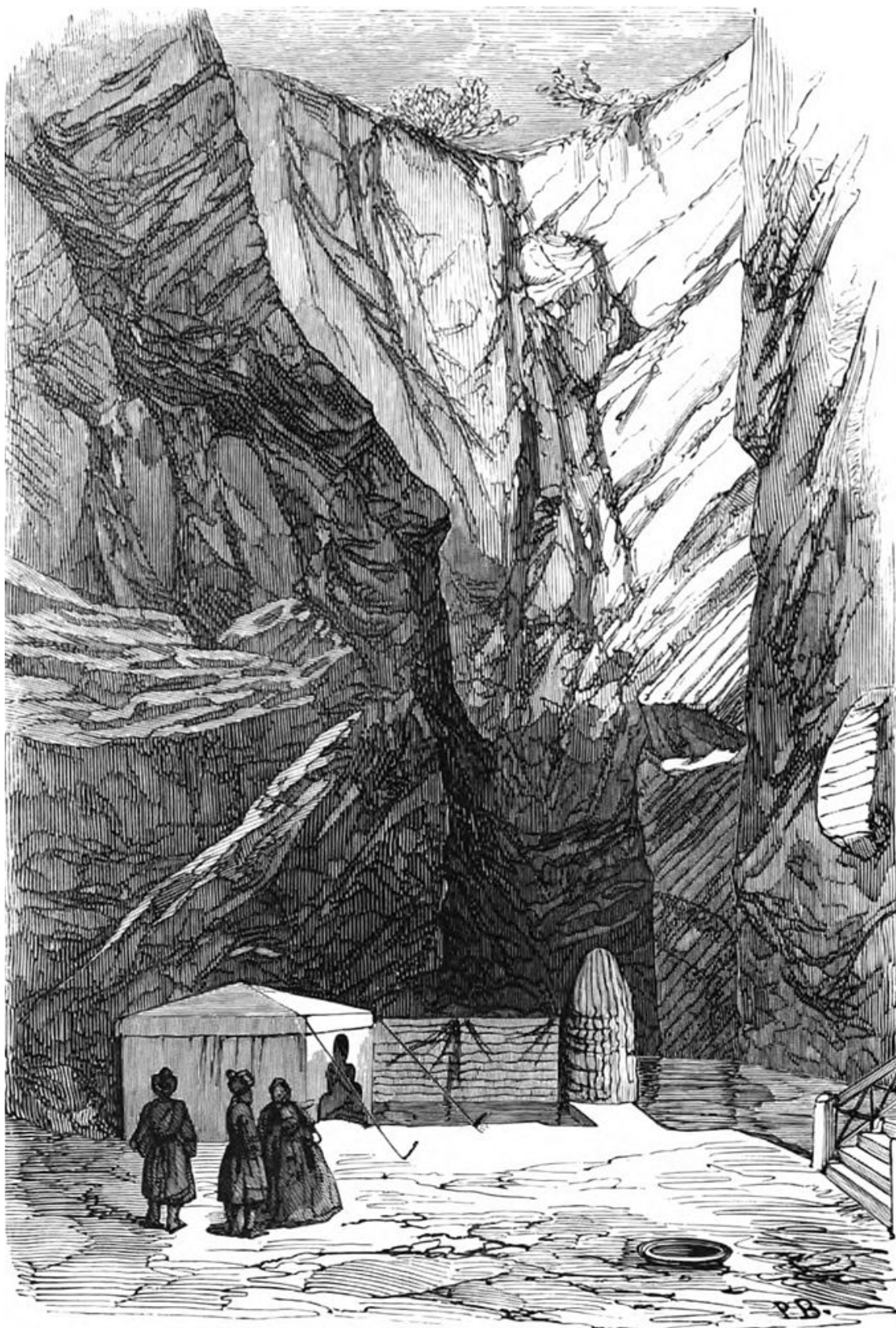


Figure 4: Floriant Gille, Le Proval à Piatigorsk, 1859 (via Wikimedia Commons)

nekul'turnost") stood in the way of a respectable cure culture.<sup>5</sup> Fiction writers seem to have felt similarly. When canonical Russian writers from the second half of the nineteenth century send their protagonists to spa resorts—I am thinking of *Family Happiness* and *The Gambler*, but also of Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina*, in which Kiti Shcherbatskaia recuperates at Bad Soden after her rejection by Vronskii—they send them to German ones. And when southern spas turn up in *fin-de-siècle* narratives, as in Lidiia Veselitskaia's 'Mimi at the Waters' ('Mimochka na vodakh', 1891—see below), comparisons with (better appointed, more fashionable) foreign resorts are seldom far from hand. Such evidence invites the conclusion that Continental watering places in some sense took over the hermeneutic and narrative-functional role of the domestic health resort in the second half of the Russian nineteenth century

A second introductory observation: a characteristic of Caucasian spa stories that remains fairly constant throughout the nineteenth century is the tendency of narrators and protagonists to supply metafictional commentary on the watering-place theme. As I show, writers from Lermontov to Veselitskaia invoke the impact upon diegetic action of prior fictional representations of southern spa culture. Discursively-derived knowledge about watering places is frequently exposed as erroneous and even harmful to those who imbibe it. Writers from Mikhail Lermontov to Veselitskaia thus invite the reader to look askance at their topographies; and, by extension, to question the idea that fiction's relationship to its real-world referents is above all a constative one.

### Spa Intrigue from Shakhovskoi to Lermontov

Southern spas of the Romantic period usually generate sexually transgressive plots. As its title suggests, Aleksandr Shakhovskoi's play *A School for Coquettes, or the Lipetsk Waters* (*Urok koketkam, ili Lipetskie vody*, 1815)—about the spa

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<sup>5</sup> Unsigned, *Otchet po ustroistvu raznykh uchrezhdenii prinalozhashchikh posetiteliam essentukskoi gruppy, i kratkie svedeniia iz istorii kavkazskikh mineral'nykh vod* (Moscow: NI Sviridov, 1898), p. 10.

escapades of furloughed soldiers—is full of amorous indiscretion. Shakhovskoi's *risqué* caricatures sparked a polemic referred to by contemporaries as the 'Lipetsk flood' and *A School for Coquettes* helped cement a sardonic association between water therapy and sexual healing.<sup>6</sup> As Richard Stites has observed, the Shakhovskoian spa serves as a 'potential curative site for romantic [and] matrimonial [...] needs as well as medical ones'.<sup>7</sup>

In the 'Princess Mary' ('Kniazhna Meri') chapter of *A Hero of Our Time* (*Geroi nashego vremeni*, 1840), Lermontov—like Shakhovskoi—depicts the Caucasian spa as a hotbed of high-class intrigue. As Robert Reid notes, Piatigorsk functions in Lermontov's novel as a 'microcosm or quintessence of the metropolitan sociotope'. But as Reid further observes, the waters are not *quite* like home: spa social life—leisured, transient, leniently deracinating—is 'steeped in teleological and motivational ambiguities absent in the capital'.<sup>8</sup> Lermontov holds with the notion, floated across an international range of nineteenth-century spa narratives and discussed in the next chapter, that there was usually something more than a little euphemistic about the claim to be taking a cure.

Indeed, *A Hero of Our Time* trots out a number of plotlines that were on their way to becoming commonplaces of Russian spa fiction by the end of the 1830s. The Byronic 'hero' of the title, Pechorin, and his rival Grushnitskii come to pistols over an overblown flirtation, reinforcing the Shakhovskoyan idea that southern resort culture was sexually permissive. They fight their duel on a narrow mountain ledge—a sublime topographical provision that neither Moscow nor Petersburg could have made. But *A Hero of Our Time* is not only Russian romanticism's paradigm text, crystallizing its fascination with exotic landscapes and mores: the novel also represents the high watermark of Romantic reflexivity. Pechorin's Byronism is exquisitely self-conscious and he has nothing but disdain for what might (anachronistically) be called his adversary's Bovarism.

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<sup>6</sup>Vadim Dmitrievich Rak 'Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Shakhovskoi', *Dictionary of Literary Biography Volume 150: Early Modern Russian Writers, Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Marcus Levitt (London: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 348-355 (p. 353).

<sup>7</sup> Stites, *Serfdom, Society and the Arts in Imperial Russia* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 213.

<sup>8</sup> Reid, 'Princess Ligovskaia and Princess Mary: The Society Tale Goes to the Caucasus', *The Society Tale in Russian Literature: From Odoevskii to Tolstoi*, ed. by Neil Cornwell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 41-58 (pp. 50-51).

Grushnitskii himself aspires to be the ‘hero’ of Lermontov’s—Pechorin’s—novel (‘Ego tsel’—sdelat’sia geroem romana’); it is partly for this reason that the logic of the narrative dictates that he should be killed. His very presence in the Caucasus evidences a ‘Romantic zeal’ (‘romanticheskii fanatizm’) which, unleashed without discrimination, swiftly becomes ridiculous.<sup>9</sup> Grushnitskii’s expectations of Piatigorsk have everything to do with storytelling and very little to do with real life. Pechorin, by contrast, is redeemed, at least in his own eyes, because he never loses sight of the fact that he is playing a part.

The (Post) Colonial Spa: Bestuzhev-Marlinskii’s ‘Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824’ and Aleksandr Druzhinin’s ‘A Russian Circassian’

‘I hear’, wrote the poet and critic Petr Viazemskii from the German resort of Wiesbaden in 1855,

that a Russian cemetery is intended [here]. The idea is an excellent one [...] It is a joy to each of us to think that if he is destined to die in a foreign land, then it will be in a hospitable spot, consecrated by an Orthodox service, and where he will be able to rest, as at home, together with his fellow countrymen, and where prayers will be said for him in his native tongue.

[Слышно, что [...] предназначается устроить русское кладбище. Мысль прекрасная [...] Отрадно каждому из нас думать, что если суждено ему будет умереть на чужбине, то есть в ней гостеприимный уголок, освященный Русским богослужением, где можно будет отдыхать, как дома, вместе с родными земляками, и где на родном языке будут молиться [...]]<sup>10</sup>

From the 1850s—earlier in the case of some noble families like the Sheremet’evs—a significant minority from among Russia’s traditional elites

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<sup>9</sup> Lermontov, Mikhail, *Geroi nashego vremeni* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978), pp. 116-117.

<sup>10</sup> Petr Viazemskii, ‘Osviashchenie tserkvi vo imia sviatye pravednye Elizavety, v Visbadene’, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 12 vols. (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Grafa Sheremeteva, 1878-96), 7, p. 5.



began to take up summer or permanent residence at German watering places, both benefitting from and helping to build the kind of physical, cultural and affective infrastructure invoked in the above quotation. (I discuss Turgenev's representation of the Russian settlement at Baden-Baden—and return to Viazemskii—in Chapter 5 of this thesis). Although Viazemskii's letters from the spa evince no awareness of the fact, this mid-century 'colonization' was in many ways a genteel reprise of the Russian colonization—the term's resonance is less figurative here—of *Caucasian* resorts in the decades following the defeat of Napoleon and in the context of significant imperial expansion. By the same token, the question of how (or whether) Russian elites made themselves at home in Western Europe after mid-century finds a useful analogue in the question of how completely they took literal and imaginative possession of their empire's southern borders as Russian territorial ambition grew from the 1820s onward.

It is unsurprising, then, that besides sex and scandal the Caucasian spa in Russian literature also hosts the twin themes of occupation and cultural liminality. As Louise McReynolds has written, the establishment of water resorts in the Caucasus represented 'a rearguard action of cultural appropriation in the long and costly conquest of [the] region'.<sup>11</sup> Several southern spas began as garrisons or army convalescent homes; and two very different short stories, taking on Shakhovskoi's evocation of Lipetsk's military aspect, unfold imperial themes at the waters.

In a narrative called 'Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824' ('Večer na kavkazskikh vodakh v 1824 godu', 1830), the writer and Decembrist Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii portrays the resort of Kislovodsk, situated some forty kilometres from Piatigorsk in the North Caucasus, as a venue for martial male sociability (yarn-spinning rather than Shakhovskoyan matchmaking). Drawing from a broad gothic palette and the generous mythopoeic allowance of the Romantic travelogue, 'Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824' is a frontier narrative in an extended sense of the term.

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<sup>11</sup>McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era* (London: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 172-3

A frame story—the narrator’s arrival at the spa on a Bulwerian stormy night and immediate recourse to a drink-soaked card table—opens out upon multiple, frequently abortive tall tales, recounted by a motley assortment of furloughed officers. All of the stories are motivated by anxiety with regard to a threatening Other (Chechen or Georgian, Polish or English, female or supernatural). Each is met by its auditors with the kind of incredulity that betokens at least a modicum of belief. The *krasnobaistvo*—grandiloquent or ostentatious storytelling—of Bestuzhev’s speakers blends the language of the bivouac and the language of high society: their narratives are by turns intricate and lustful, proverbial and direct. On a both thematic and linguistic level, ‘Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824’ dwells in the unclaimed spaces between cultures, subjects and cosmologies. ‘External frontiers’, writes Franco Moretti, ‘easily generate narratives’; and the wider Morettian principle that ‘space acts upon style’ finds confirmation in Bestuzhev’s story, in which the borderline dynamics of an encampment on hostile ground stimulate an engagement with the more intermediate aspects of experience and its narration.<sup>12</sup>

Bestuzhev’s polyphonic spa story also gives voice to the idea—axiomatic in later writing on resort culture—that visitors to spas generally arrive with an ulterior motive:

‘[W]hy are we all here? [...] Everyone will say: to take a cure. But aside from this many have incidental or even primary aims. Some come to dissipate themselves in love affairs; some to make themselves respectable through marriage; others to redeem the injustices of fortune at the card table’

Зачем мы все здесь? [...] все скажут: лечиться, но, кроме этого, есть побочные или главные цели у многих. Одни приезжают рассеяться любовными связями; другие—остепениться женитьбой; третьи—поправить картами несправедливость фортуны [...]<sup>13</sup>

(139)

<sup>12</sup> Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 2009), pp. 37; 43.

<sup>13</sup> Bestuzhev-Marlinksi. ‘Večer na kavkazskikh vodakh v 1824 godu’, *Kavkazskie povesti* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1995), pp. 133-172 (p. 139).

This passage recalls Stites's reading of Shakhovskoi's *A Lesson for Coquettes*: each of the three ulterior motives invoked by Bestuzhev's narrator refers to a prospect of relief (erotic, status-related, or economic) that can be read as a kind of carnival-mirror image of the (ostensibly paramount) medical aspect of the cure.

Aleksandr Druzhinin's 1855 story 'A Russian Circassian' ('Russkii cherkes', 1855) also stages tall tales and dubious witness in a colonial spa setting. Displaying a Lermontovian taste for metafictional self-irony, Druzhinin has his protagonist experience several layers of discursive mediation (from literary reading to word-of-mouth) that progressively distort his vision of Caucasian resort culture. Matvei Kuzmich Makhmetov, the 'Russian Circassian' of the title, is a retired collegiate assessor whose shrewish wife scorns and impedes his inchoate Romantic sensibilities. Beguiled by a chance visit from a 'relative', Aslan Makhmetov—who brags of the dagger-wielding exploits of yet further Circassian namesakes—Matvei Kuzmich begins to imagine himself a warrior in the mould of the legendary guerrilla leader Shamil.<sup>14</sup>

After racing through the Caucasus tales of Lermontov and Bestuzhev-Marlinksii in his library, Matvei Kuzmich procures himself a beshmet and sword-belt and sallies forth to Piatigorsk. Upon arrival, he leaves his daughter at the baths and volunteers for a perilous military expedition. Predictably, his bookish reveries fizzle out into humiliation. All who meet him at the spa take him for the tourist he is. (Piatigorsk is shown already to have a flourishing souvenir industry.) The soldiers who encourage his zeal to enlist are only enjoying themselves at his expense, while his 'brother' Aslan turns out to be a fraud and a coward. In a final, proverbial moment of shame, Druzhinin's 'Russian Circassian'—an onomastic impossibility in the ethical economy of the text—is ripped off by a local money changer.

As Susan Layton has observed, Druzhinin's narrative can be read alongside Tolstoi's 'The Raid' ('Nabeg', 1853) and *The Cossacks* (*Kazaki*, 1863) as a parodic mid-century treatment of Romantic fascination with the alien

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<sup>14</sup> Imam Shamil (1797-1871) fought the Russians in the North Caucasus during the Caucasian War (1817-1864).

landscapes and cultures of the Caucasus.<sup>15</sup> Druzhinin, a pleasurably irritable satirist, communicates disenchantment with the culturally appropriative narrative tendencies of previous Russian writers: Matvei Kuzmich's gauche idealization of 'Circassian' valour and simultaneous desire to join a Russian imperial campaign devoted to stamping out literary simple-mindedness about the complexities of Transcaucasian affairs. 'Russkii cherkes' also implies that neither liberal-cosmopolitan idylls of mutual adulation ('Russia is good, but the Caucasus is even better'; 'Rossiia khorosho, a Kavkaz luchshe') nor appeals to a common origin represent satisfactory solutions to the psychic and diplomatic challenges thrown up by Russia's southward expansion.<sup>16</sup> Matvei Kuzmich's gullibility is piqued by a common surname and he couches his growing conviction that the Caucasus is his 'motherland' (*rodina*) in references to his Circassian 'blood'; such bases for identification are made to look ridiculous in Druzhinin's watering-place text.<sup>17</sup>

Finally on 'A Russian Circassian', it is worth noting that here, as so often in accounts of Caucasian *and* Continental resort culture, the spa *qua* spa—and Matvei Kuzmich's daughter with it—swiftly recedes into the diegetic middle distance.

#### Expectations Dashed: Lidiia Veselitskaia's 'Mimi at the Waters'

'Mimi at the Waters' ('Mimochka na vodakh', 1891), by the popular *fin-de-siècle* author Lidiia Veselitskaia ('Mikulich'), is a chronological outlier when it comes to Russian writing on southern spas. Written at a time when European resorts had long since begun to usurp upon the Caucasian spa's place as a stock setting in fiction, the story (one of three Veselitskaia wrote about the coming of age of a young bride; as in the edition I cite, they have frequently been published as a novel in three parts under the title *Mimochka*) unites the two traditions: her

<sup>15</sup> See Susan Layton, 'Colonial Mimicry and Disenchantment in Alexander Druzhinin's "A Russian Circassian" and Other Stories', *Russian Review*, 60, (2001), 56-71.

<sup>16</sup> Druzhinin, 'Russkii cherkes' (1855) in *Sochineniia*, 7 vols. (St. Petersburg: Akademiia nauk, 1865-7), 2, pp. 178-220 (p. 200).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

heroine visits both the French spa of Vichy and the Caucasus resorts of Zheleznovodsk and Kislovodsk.

‘Mimi at the Waters’ makes much of the differences between Russian and European spas. Mimi’s mother worries, when a course of hydrotherapy at Zheleznovodsk is broached, that the resort’s facilities will be ‘primitive and uncomfortable’ (‘primitivno, ne ustroeno’) by comparison with Vichy.<sup>18</sup> Her anxieties are somewhat soothed by the mental image of resort culture conjured by her daughter’s rather elderly new husband, and this image owes much to the spa fiction of Bestuzhev and Lermontov: (‘[s]hashlyk [a rustic kebab], Georgian white wine, narzan [Caucasian mineral water] and cavalcades on moonlit nights’ (‘[s]hashlyk, kakhetskoe, narzan i kaval’kady v lunnye nochi’)) (66).

Throughout the story, indeed, Veselitskaia represents the southern spa as a venue onto which cure seekers project fantasies of liberation and rejuvenation. Mimi is suffering from something neurasthenic; the fact of her marriage to a much older man and a certain drollness in Mikulich’s narrative voice when the ailment is described intimate that the root cause is sexual frustration. Her reveries of resort life, like her husband’s, hinge on the promise of unconstrained sociability—and, we might infer, sexuality:

[Mimochka] like[d] the prospect of going to the Caucasus. [Her friend] Netti had spend a summer at Kislovodsk and returned with very pleasant memories. Most of all, she seemed to have been emancipated there.

[Мимочке] хочется ехать на Кавказ. Нетти провела лето в Кисловодске и вернулась с очень приятными воспоминаниями. Там она, главным образом, и эмансипировалась.

(59)

In Bestuzhev’s Romantic spa narrative, Kislovodsk is an authentically emancipatory space: demobbed, far from home and lubricated with alcohol, the

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<sup>18</sup> See Veselitskaia, *Mimochka* (1891) (Moscow: EKSMO, 2003), p. 58. Further references in parenthesis.

male speakers in ‘Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824’ give rein to their passions and anxieties. By contrast, Veselitskaia’s *fin-de-siècle* spa text takes pains to undermine the expectations of release it engenders, pointing up (rather in the manner of Druzhinin’s ‘A Russian Circassian’) a yawning gap between reputation and reality—signifier and signified. Late-imperial spa social life turns out—for well-behaved young women at least—to be regimented and repetitious:

Mimi and [her cousin] Vava would rise at seven and by eight they would already be at the early concert, where they would drink the waters and walk about until it was time for tea; then it was time for a bath; then dinner, followed by more waters; then another walk; then music again; and water again; and a walk again; and so on until evening [...]

В семь часов, Мимочка и Вава вставали и в восемь были уже на утренней музыке, где пили воды и гуляли до чая; потом ванна; потом обед, и еще воды, и еще прогулка, и опять музыка, и опять воды, и опять прогулка, и так до вечера [...]

(87-88)

Discursive mediation gives Mimi quite the wrong idea of Zheleznovodsk, whipping up speculative desire that resort social life cannot satisfy. Her dreams of emancipation crash against mundane, medicalized reality. An amorous atmosphere (‘atmosfera vliublennosti’) surrounds her (‘Kislovodsk, as Lermontov says, hosts the denouement of all the love affairs conceived at the foot of the Beshtau’ (‘V Kislovodske, govorit Lermontov, byvaet razviazka vsekh romanov, nachavshikhsia u podoshvy Beshtau’) (99-101)). But this is ‘atmosphere’ in a strikingly literal sense of the word: pervasive but insubstantial. Veselitskaia’s heroine remains ‘romanceless’ (‘bez romana’). The story ends back in St. Petersburg, with Mimi fielding questions from maiden aunts about whether Caucasian spas are really such hotbeds of flirtation as they have been led to believe. In the final lines, the party then look at stereoscope images of dramatic

mountain scenery that Mimi—to general surprise—never got around to visiting. Even for those who have been, it would appear, the southern watering place's simulacral aspect stubbornly conceals its core.

A footnote to this survey of Russian fictional responses to the southern spa arrives in the shape of an unrealized work by Aleksandr Pushkin, a totemic figure in the nation's literary culture and, in works such as the narrative poem *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennik*, 1822), an important originator of its 'Caucasus text'. A fragment known to scholars as *Roman na kavkazskikh vodakh* (translatable either as *Novel at a Caucasian Spa* or *Romance at a Caucasian*) and dated by Paul Debreczeny to 1831 has entered the annals of Pushkiniana not least because it is viewed as representative of an important step in Pushkin's creative development: namely the attempt, at the height of his fame as a poet, to 'develop an omniscient narrative stance [in prose]'. Pushkin got no further with his spa novel (or romance) than a few plot outlines and a roughly drafted opening. Nonetheless, the manuscript evidence suggests themes ('a satirical description of society at the watering-places [...] a notorious cardsharp and daredevil [...] a duel') taken up in later representations of the Continental spa.<sup>19</sup>

#### 'A Merry Place, 'Tis Said, In Days of Yore': The Domestic Spa in British Fiction

British spa culture was a venerable concern by the middle of the nineteenth century, its absence from Richard Altick's monumental *The Presence of the Present: Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel* (1991) rather signifying a worn-in familiarity than any lack of cultural or literary interest in the waters. (Altick's omission of Baden-Baden from his sections on the English abroad is less easily accounted for.)<sup>20</sup> The 'suppression' at the Reformation of England's many holy wells had in fact amounted only to their secularization and Bath's popularity with

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<sup>19</sup> On Pushkin's abortive spa text, see Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin: A Study of Alexander Pushkin's Prose Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 143-144.

<sup>20</sup> See Altick, *The Presence of the Present: Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991).

royals, aristocrats and landed gentry looking for a *via recta ad vitam longam* had made it 'in terms of social importance the second city of the realm' by the seventeenth century. Other resorts (Harrogate, Cheltenham, Bristol Hot Wells) exerted an almost equal draw.<sup>21</sup> But as in the Russian context, the rise of the Continental watering place in the middle of the nineteenth century threatened Britain's spa culture with supersession: Anne Digby has estimated that by the 1850s the most popular German resorts attracted 'four to six times as many' visitors as Harrogate, the most popular British spa of the decade; and, again as in the Russian case, fictions about domestic watering places are rather thin on the ground between 1850 and 1900.<sup>22</sup>

The similarities between the British and the Russian cases end there, however. The intertextual picture painted of English watering places before 1850 contrasts vividly with the Russian redaction of the Caucasian spa. Unlike Russia's southern resorts, English spas could claim no liminal interest, no exotic topography and no raffish martial provenance. The most popular English water resorts stood at a modest distance from the major cities that furnished most of their clientele: Bath's boons to the animal economy were readily accessible via the great west road from London, while by 1838 Charles Dickens and Hablot Knight Browne ('Phiz') could leave Snow Hill at eight in the morning and reach Leamington Spa in time for supper.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, English watering-place culture emerges from English fiction as metropolitan culture transplanted but not drastically re-conditioned. English spas, attracting a broader clientele than their Russian counterparts in the nineteenth century, brought polite society face-to-face with the populace at large, but not on reconstituted terms.

Nonetheless, Bath's urbanity and demographic variety, cultivated in the eighteenth century by impresarios like Beau Nash and paradoxical in view of the city's apparently therapeutic priorities ('a great national hospital, [yet Bath] exceeds every other part of England in amusements and dissipation') had been

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<sup>21</sup> See Phyllis May Hembry, *The English Spa 1560–1815: A Social History*. (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 2–4; 53; 245.

<sup>22</sup> Digby, p. 222.

<sup>23</sup> See Bryan Homer, *Charles Dickens and Leamington Spa: Fact, Fiction and Fancy*. (Coventry: Jones-Sands, 1991), p. 4. The railway soon reduced these travel times dramatically.



remarked upon, usually pejoratively, from the eighteenth century onwards.<sup>24</sup> What was different about Bath, perhaps, was that it stood for London condensed and at leisure, and so permitted the bringing into sharper relief of social and economic differences usually obscured by distance and habit.

Bath also facilitates synoptic perspectives on urban social life that the capital by its scale would not permit, a narrative expediency taken advantage of by writers from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. Jane Austen's evocation in *Persuasion* (1818) of the varied sociability of Bath's outdoor spaces ('sauntering politicians, bustling housekeepers, flirting girls, [...] nursery-maids and children') recalls the vision of Tunbridge Wells offered by the poet John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, in 1674:

[...N]e'er could conventicle, play or fair  
For a true medley with this herd compare.  
Here lords, knights, squires, ladies and countesses,  
Chandlers, mum-bacon women, sempstresses  
Were mixed together, nor did they agree  
More in their humors than their quality.<sup>25</sup>

Rochester's comparison of Tunbridge Wells to a dissenting conventicle is perhaps a little misleading. Neither his poem nor Austen's representation of Bath (which, reminding us that such precision did not originate with Zola and George Gissing, is painstakingly drawn from the point of view of urban geography) evokes partisan fervour—or speaks to the coming together of people of varying 'quality' as a matter that might signal or occasion threat. Rochester's account is carnivalizing in Bakhtin's sense of holiday forgetfulness: upper and lower orders 'mix' raucously and colourfully but without combination or combustion. Meanwhile, as Adela Pinch has suggested, *Persuasion*'s street scenes deploy social variety as a kind of visual 'white noise', framing rather than informing

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<sup>24</sup> John Walker, *The Universal Gazetteer* (London: J. Johnson, 1807) p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> See *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion* (1818) ed. by John Davie (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 445; 'Tunbridge Wells', in *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. by David M. Vieth (London: Yale Nota Bene, 2002), pp. 76-77.

focalized action.<sup>26</sup> As Richard Berger has noted, Austen's Bath Spa 'offer[s] a palette of events, rituals, history and characters with which to assemble a critique of Regency England'—but Berger's figure of assembly speaks to the relative decorum of the finished portrait.<sup>27</sup>

As a general rule, then, English fictional writing on domestic watering places treats the domestic spa less as a socially vexing space than as a bright and commodious canvas. A partial exception is Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). Eighteenth-century Bath emerges from *Humphry Clinker*, an epistolary novel about a London family's cantankerous journey from London to Scotland via a succession of water resorts, as a broad, earthy and significantly equalising locus (though in truth the same might be said of almost any of Smollett's diegetic worlds). In the terms of the narrative's tripartite ethico-spatial structure, Bath functions as a midpoint between London and Loch Lomond, boundary-marking binary opposites. (Smollett's picaresque narrative also takes in the 'absolute rustication' of Bristol Hot Wells, the refuge of 'half a dozen poor emaciated creatures, with ghostly looks, in the last stage of consumption'.<sup>28</sup>) In practice, however, and as in Austen and Rochester, resort culture is shown to lean libidinally towards the capital.

London is twice invoked as a unit of comparison in *Humphry Clinker's* Bath passages: first in the context of a self-aggrandizing remark ('London itself can hardly exhibit one species of diversion, to which we have not something analogous at Bath'; 47); and then when a squabble over genteel refreshments gives rise to 'the tropes and figures of Billingsgate' (50). But Smollett's Bath is not *only* a proxy for the metropolis. Indeed, *Humphry Clinker* takes the reader

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<sup>26</sup> Adela Pinch, 'Lost in a Book: Jane Austen's *Persuasion*' in *Jane Austen's Persuasion*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), pp. 205-240 (p. 217).

<sup>27</sup> Richard Berger, 'Hang a Right at the Abbey: Jane Austen and the Imagined City' in *Global Jane Austen: Pleasure, Passion and Possessiveness in the Jane Austen Community*, ed. by Robert G. Dryden and Laurence Raw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 119-142 (p. 128). Anne's reunion at Bath with a former schoolfriend, Mrs. Smith, who has fallen into straitened social circumstances (and who, crippled by rheumatic fever, is the only person in Austen's Bath who takes the waters for health reasons), marks the limit of *Persuasion's* engagement with social otherness. Austen's concern in narrating spa social life is for finely graded distinctions rather than macrosocial ones and this emphasis is characteristic of resort-set English fiction more generally.

<sup>28</sup> *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. by O.M. Brack (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 18; 34. Further references in parenthesis.

beyond the calls and balls of performative sociability to the very stink of the city's effluence. The watering-place passages of the novel take in not only coffee houses, milliners' establishments, inns and, repeatedly, the street, but also pumps and wells. Where Austen's social realia are well packaged and overwhelmingly visual, Smollett's watering-place topography is, in the best eighteenth-century tradition, excursive and olfactory. Austen's 'flirting girls' flash before the eyes; but *Humphry Clinker* glories in and takes rhetorical and imaginative impetus from Bath's loucheness. A description of 'the vast quantity of mud and slime which the river leaves at low ebb under the windows of the Pumproom' gives rise to an ethnographical digression ('individuals differ [...] *toto coelo* in their opinion of smells [...] the French [are] pleased with the putrid effluvia of animal food; and so [are] the Hottentots in Africa' (80)) that thickens the overall texture of the narrative's evocation of resort life.<sup>29</sup>

Smollett's novel registers the idea, also floated in Druzhinin and Veselitskai's nineteenth-century Caucasian-spa texts, that spa culture can be glossed in terms of a glaring gap between representation and reality. There is no suggestion in Austen's *Persuasion* that a sojourn at Bath might help Louisa Musgrove recover from her fall at Lyme Regis; Austen, inhabiting the self-understanding of her protagonists, de-emphasizes the city's therapeutic aspect just as they do. By contrast, in *Humphry Clinker*, the multiply distempered but narratorially authoritative Matt Bramble levels against Bath the charge of having abandoned all concern for medical regimen to become 'the very center of racket and dissipation'.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, and as I have already suggested, *Humphry Clinker*'s spa passages make Bath a stage for anxiety about contamination in the body social, engaging more persistently than Rochester, Austen and indeed any other watering-place text in the English canon with the spa resort as a leveller of class hierarchies. (Neither Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) nor Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), which both represent Bath as a sexual playground, emphasize this aspect of resort culture.) For Smollett, watering places not only deracinate: crucially,

they bring the uprooted subject into contact with other uprooted subjects, facilitating a disarrangement of social identity absent from most narratives of dislocation (insofar as these tend to situate the uprooted individual amongst natives). In *Humphry Clinker*, Lydia Melford's sweetheart (a strolling player and an unpalatable match) turns up at Bath disguised as a Jew; while Matt Bramble's hypochondriacal fear of contaminated water ('I can't help suspecting that there is, or may be, some regurgitation from the bath into the cistern of the pump' (45)) has clear figurative force, as does the tale of how '[a] paralytic attorney of Shoe-lane [...] kicked the shins of the chancellor of England' (48).

Smollett uses the novel's epistolary form, which allows for multiple focalizations of the same narrative action, to dramatize the ethical ambivalence of class encounter, with Matt Bramble and Lydia Melford offering versions of Bath social life that differ both temperamentally and factually. Lydia is exhilarated by the variety; Matt cleaves closer to the opinion, put by Smollett into the mouth of the actor James Quin (1693-1766), that contact with their betters will improve the mores of the lower classes only 'as a plate of marmalade would improve a pan of sirreverence [faeces]' (49). Yet for all the diversity on show in Smollett's Bath, *Humphry Clinker* arguably goes not much further than *Persuasion* in registering the necessary (and especially *economic*) interdependences between different tiers that are a defining feature of urban social life. The novel's lower orders are of a dependably tawdry sort and play well-defined ancillary parts. (Humphry Clinker himself, 'filthy tatterdemaleon' (80) and Christian preceptor, is a cipher, his beleaguered goodness serving as a reproach to the spleen and complacency of Smollett's central cast.) Bath 'society' remains a conceptual and narrative singularity, its presumptions unruffled by the ribald ambience that surrounds it.

Next in this survey of British watering places in fiction—a Scottish spa. *St Ronan's Well* (1824), Walter Scott's only novel with a nineteenth-century setting, invites comparison with the Russian resort texts of Bestuzhev-Marlinksii and Druzhinin by making a watering place the setting for a 'frontier' narrative of sorts. But Scott's spa, an imaginative improvisation upon a spring in the village of Innerleithen in the hill country of the Scottish Borders, is hardly a liminal

space in the manner of Kislovodsk or Piatigorsk (although the heavy presence of retired Indian nabobs lends the text a marginal colonial air).

*St Ronan's Well* is also a rarity among British domestic spa texts in deploying what would become a popular motif in writing about resorts like Baden-Baden: the idea of the spa as bedevilled. 'A merry place, 'tis said, in days of yore;/ But something ails it now—the place is cursed', reads the novel's epigraph from Wordsworth's 'Hart-Leap Well' (whose protagonist, curiously, is one 'Sir Walter'). But despite this and a number of other allegorical touches, the mythico-historical consciousness of Wordsworth's ballad about the slaying of a deer in the vicinity of a Yorkshire spring and the event's ramifications down the ages is largely absent from Scott's account of St. Ronan's Well. Rather than making a Romantic symbol of his rustic spa, Scott represents the water cure as a distinctly modern medico-commercial phenomenon—albeit a phony one. Indeed, *St Ronan's Well* satirizes the kind of idealizing topographical agenda that Scott's own oeuvre has sometimes been accused of pursuing with respect to the Scottish borders.

An opportunistic laird, 'jump[ing] at the ready penny', cobbles together a resort culture at St. Ronan's after the 'miraculous' healing of a fashionable lady (an occurrence ironized into disbelief by Scott's narrator).<sup>31</sup> Meretricious medical authority (the 'fashionable' resort physician is a Dr. Quackleben) and insouciant elite fashion ('My friend, the late Earl of Featherhead, was a man of judgment' (v. 1; 167) conspire in the interests of cynical venture capital. *St Ronan's Well* gives voice to the kind of water-based puns ('hot water') and iconography (including naiads, the erotically coded nymphs of classical mythology) that Victorian periodical journalism would continue to deploy in narrating hot springs culture. But perhaps more importantly for our purposes, in casting his water resort as a high society milieu shot through with hypocrisy, Scott anticipates what is almost a master trope in mid- and late-century representations of the Continental spa. Like later watering-place focalizers such as Turgenev's Litvinov (in *Smoke*) and Eliot's Daniel Deronda, Scott's hero, Francis Tyrrel, is a lone sincere conscience

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<sup>31</sup> Scott, *St. Ronan's Well*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and co.; London: Hurst, Robinson and co., 1824) 1, p. 53. Further references in parenthesis.

in the cynical social atmosphere of St. Ronan's. Appalled by the falsity of the place—sold as a '*panpharmacon*' (v.1; 108), the laird's waters are in fact a profit-driven humbug—Tyrrel cannot make his literalizing voice heard. Scott's spa is a haven for fabricators and opportunists, but makes mincemeat of the ethical subject who privileges truth, nature and interiority over social and economic performance.

This sense of the spa as a morally compromised or compromising venue also permeates *Dombey and Son* (1848), in which Dickens originates one of his more sensational marriage plots at Leamington Spa. Paul Dombey senior's ensnarement by the mercenary widow Edith Granger ('very handsome, very haughty, very wilful') may be condign punishment for his own emotionally stinting treatment of his children.<sup>32</sup> But Mr. Dombey's decline, which his resort-conceived marriage precipitates, is a source of narrative pathos (he is, after all, both avatar and victim of the atomizing logic of industrial capital). Those characters most identified with Leamington Spa, on the other hand, are, if not demonic, preternatural enough to deter readerly sympathy. Major Bagstock (a 'false creature', a 'perfidious goblin', an 'overfed Mephistopheles' (204-207) takes Paul Dombey to the baths on the pretext of soothing his grief at the death of his son and heir. Instead he delivers him into the hands of Edith Granger and her procuress of a mother, whose lack of humanity is evinced both physiognomically and in the ambivalence of her idioms:

"What I want," drawled Mrs Skewton, pinching her shrivelled throat, 'is heart.' It was frightfully true in one sense, if not in that in which she used the phrase. "What I want, is frankness, confidence, less conventionality, and freer play of soul. We are so dreadfully artificial."

We were, indeed.

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<sup>32</sup> *Dombey and Son* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1848), p. 203. Further references in parenthesis.

Here Mrs. Skewton's 'wanting' speaks ostensibly to desire—but in truth to cultivated deficiency. (Dickens often rather simplifies the intrapersonal drama of hypocrisy.) Her self-proclaimed sentimental ethics are as much an instrument of self-advancement as the wheeled chair in which she navigates Leamington Spa; and she and her daughter have the lean, hungry and flexible manners of the status speculator, by the 1840s a venerable spa type. (At Bath, Smollett's Tabitha Bramble has to deal with the advances of Sir Ulic MacKilligut, an out-at-elbows Irish baronet.) As I show in Chapter 6, the social climber, whose relationship to legitimate culture is always an ambivalent one in that (s)he both threatens its stability and reinforces its values, has a central place in the ethical economy of the nineteenth-century's Continental-spa text.

An urbane climate of transience conducive (on the positive side) to atmospheric diversion and (on the downside) to devious parvenu ploys: such, if cultural liminality is the obvious banner headline in the case of Russian tales of the Caucasian spa, might be a rough summing-up of canonical English literature's vision of domestic water resorts. In the case of the United States and the novel of Saratoga, the keynotes are different again: expectation, imitation and the problems of leisure in an age tending to sanctify work.

#### 'Why has nobody done a story about Saratoga?': Domestic Resorts in American Fiction

American writing about American watering places bucks the chronological trend observed so far in this chapter. The 'Saratoga novel' of the 1870s, 1880s and 1890, whose exponents included William Dean Howells, the Horatian satirist Marietta Holley and popular practitioners of the 'novelette' form like Jennie E. Hicks, was sooner a discursive back-formation than a trend that informed the image of the Continental spa: just as Baden-Baden and Bad Homburg set the commercial examples that Saratoga Springs and other popular resorts like Newport, Rhode Island followed at mid-century, so American writing about European resort culture set the tone for representations of the domestic scene. James's European spa fictions of the 1870s undoubtedly played a role in

retrofitting Saratoga, as, perhaps, did novels like Francis Marion Crawford's *Doctor Claudius* (1883), which flits, with a comparative eye, between Baden-Baden and Newport. But magazine and journal culture, for which Continental watering places were a consistent object of fascination, was probably most influential of all: much American writing about Saratoga has the keen eye for scintillation of a double-page spread in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*; and as the epigraphs to this chapter suggest, American travel writing evinces something close to an obsession with situating the United States's natural and cultural endowments with respect to European equivalents.

Some historical contexts, to begin with. Hot-spring bathing and drinking were established informal practices in the United States by the end of the colonial period. Saratoga Springs had a modest upper-class clientele as early as 1815, part of a wider surge of interest in the landscapes of the Hudson River Valley and Niagara Falls area. A dedicated hydropathic periodical (*The Water-Cure Journal*) was published twice monthly out of New York from 1845; similar ventures were tried in Yellow Springs, Ohio (*Water-Cure Monthly*) and Brattleboro, Vermont (*Water-Cure World*). But the fashionable spa resorts of the United States nonetheless developed 'in conscious imitation of the watering places of England and Germany' during the antebellum period.<sup>33</sup> Thomas Chambers, who describes the domestic spa resort as 'a laboratory for the new nation and a site of unification', acknowledges that American watering-place culture was as much a phenomenon of emulation as of experiment; both Saratoga ('the Baden-Baden of America') and the practice of writing about the resort were markedly (and often acknowledgedly) derivative enterprises.<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, American spa culture emerges from *Sparkles from Saratoga* (1873), a wryly reflexive novelette by Jennie E. Hicks under the pen-name Sophie Sparkle, as a phenomenon mediated almost to the point of recursion. Hicks's narrative follows a set of pre-fabricated social types (artful, peevish wives, henpecked husbands, irreverent young people) on a summer tour of bathing

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<sup>33</sup> Bradley, p. 170.

<sup>34</sup> Chambers, *Drinking the Waters: Creating an American Leisure Class at Nineteenth-Century Mineral Springs* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2003), xiii.



resorts and sightseeing spots. Themselves avid consumers of light fiction, Sophie Sparkle's characters consecrate their time at Saratoga in particular to the pursuit of conventional signs: taught to expect that a watering place should be a 'veritable 'School for Scandal', they detect scandal in every glance.<sup>35</sup> Accustomed to measuring American resorts by reference to European standards, their impressions of Saratoga are conditioned by second-hand knowledge of the (unseen) Byronic landscapes of Germany ('Can the Rhine, the far-famed beautiful Rhine [...] more fully enthrall the heart and hold it captive with a wizard's spell than out own noble and picturesque Hudson?'; 15).

Hick's text offers a useful insight into the leisure culture of the Eastern middle classes in the post-bellum United States—and the publishing culture that went with it. In the 1870s, Saratoga, 'that Mecca of fashionable pilgrims' (5) with its stores 'filled with the latest New York fashions' (44), became an important stop on a new bourgeois vacation itinerary that also included West Point and Niagara Falls. Saratoga was thus, by implication, a *de rigueur* setting for Sophie Sparkle the novelettist. (Success in the novelette form, Hicks seems to understand, implies originality and pabulum in the right proportions; light fiction exists in part to pre-digest topical themes on behalf of the busy consumer, but must reflect popular wisdom in doing so.) *Sparkles from Saratoga's* ideal readership, women of leisure or—more probably—provincial aspirants to that status, could be expected to want to visit the resort (if they had not already been); the text's bromides—and they are plenty—thus serve the interests of both imaginative projection and nostalgic identification.

Somewhat covertly but consistently, *Sparkles from Saratoga* alerts the reader to the fact that the portrait it offers of Saratoga Springs is a tapestry of received ideas. For the novelette's narrator—Sophie Sparkle is an enigmatic creation, by turns complacent and introspective—seeing the resort for the first time feels 'like the re-perusal of some beautiful half-forgotten story' (12); while the placing-at-odds of surface and interior ('Dresses, not brains, are at a premium at Saratoga' (48); 'Saratoga may well be compared to a beautiful bubble [...] but a

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<sup>35</sup> *Sparkles from Saratoga* (New York: American News Co., 1873), p. 47. Further references in parenthesis.

hollow bubble after all' (16) is a persistent trope. The exact origins of Miss Sparkle's ideas are never divulged, but the translucent, vaporous—and, of course, spa-punning—imagery ('Sparkle', 'bubbles') in which the narrative is drenched hints at less than weighty sources; I would venture that Sophie and her fellow travellers have been reading feuilleton-ish pieces in lifestyle publications like *Frank Leslie's Lady's Magazine*.

Whatever their provenance, the expectations of elegant drama that Hicks's characters carry with them to Saratoga are consistently half disappointed (or half met, depending on one's perspective). The springs have fascinating widows and 'haughty belles' (126) to spare; and there is high excitement over the anachronistic prospect of a duel. But the Proustian disillusionments of a world lived first in the imagination are never far from hand ('something of [Saratoga's] old fascination [seems] gone'; 15) and a whole chapter is devoted to the seductive error of longing for 'the "Good Old Times"' ('Only remember [...] the weary [hotel] stairs you had to climb [...] when now [...] you are carried to your own floor without the slightest effort of your own'; 69). (Had Hicks read James's 1870 essay 'Saratoga', in which he confesses that before his first visit he had 'supposed [the resort] to be buried in a sort of elegant wilderness', and notes his perplexity at discovering in 'the Saratoga of experience [...] sidewalks, a great many shops, and a magnificent array of loafers'?<sup>36</sup>) The obligatory 'scandalous flirtations' (183) come only in report; 'genuine *affaire[s] du coeur*' (112) are waited for in vain; while 'fortune hunters [...] in abundance' (57) materialize only as a titillating possibility. In this light, the 'Circean spell' (14) cast by Saratoga might be read as referring rather to the springs' power to engender anticipation than their capacity to induce actively dazzling conduct.

A second, post-Reconstruction Saratoga narrative makes less of culturally inscribed expectation and rather more of resort culture—elevators and all—as an embodiment of bourgeois modernity. Marietta Holley's *Samantha at Saratoga; or, 'Flirtin' with Fashion* (1887) enacts a watering-place encounter between the high-octane leisure habits of the Gilded Age and the puritanism and old-world

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<sup>36</sup> 'Saratoga', in *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America* (New York: Library of America, 1993), pp. 750-758 (p. 750).

manners of rural upstate New York. The novel was one of 1887's bestsellers, selling several hundred thousand copies.<sup>37</sup>

In *Samantha at Saratoga* Holley employs the narrative voice she perfected over the course of more than twenty *Samantha* books. The plain (or rather heavily stylized) speech of Mrs. Josiah Allen, a 'rustic philosopher farm wife', is designed to puncture the self-importance and crazed pace of industrial civilization ('Yes the hull nation is in a hurry to get somewhere else, to go on, it can't wait').<sup>38</sup> Samantha's idiosyncratic expression also serves to render strange (in the Shklovskian sense) the post-bellum United States's prevailing self-performative modes:

Oh! What a seen! What a seen! Back and forth, passin' and repassin, to and fro, parasols, and dogs, and wimmen, and men, and babies, and parasols, to and fro, to and fro. Why, is I stood there long so crazed would I have become at the seen that I should have felt that [husband] Josiah was a To and I wuz a Fro, or I wuz a parasol and he wuz a dog.

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As Holley's biographer Jane Curry has noted, the character of Samantha, whose wide popularity led to her creator being called the 'female Mark Twain', represents an attempt to 'endow [...] principles with personality'.<sup>39</sup> To this end *Samantha at Saratoga* sets up a spatially inscribed ethical opposition: between those Americans whose sense of work as a cardinal Christian virtue remains undiminished by the labour-saving advances and leisured fads of industrial modernity (Samantha and other corn-fed natives of Jonesville, NY) and those whose (Weberian) sense of calling been sacrificed at the altar of consumption and display (watering-place society). In sending Mrs. Allen (and, more particularly, her husband Josiah) to the baths, Holley dramatizes an idea both proverbial and

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<sup>37</sup> Kate H. Winter, *Marietta Holley: Life with Josiah Allen's Wife* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Marietta Holley ('Josiah Allen's Wife'), *Samantha at Saratoga* (London: Sampson Low & Co., 1887) p. 17. Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>39</sup> Jane Curry, *Marietta Holley* (New York: Twayne, 1996), pp. 6; 1. Curry's too (xiii) is the characterization of Samantha as a 'rustic philosopher farm wife'.

transcultural *and* particular to America and the Gilded Age: that leisure and moral discombobulation go together in an ugly fellowship.

At Saratoga, the proverbial conceptual opposition *askēsis/hēdonē* ('idle hands are the devil's playthings'; or, in the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher's terms, 'the indolent mind is not empty, but full of vermin'), plays itself out along gender lines.<sup>40</sup> Samantha's own invulnerability to enervating atmosphere of Saratoga is figured sartorially: seeing bourgeois fashion for the oppressive and unnatural fetish it is ('as fer the waists bein' all girded up and drawed in, that is nothin' but crushed bones and flesh and vitals'; 37), she keeps on her high-necked alpaca gown. Josiah, on the other hand, succumbs to the spirit of the place almost at once ('Yes, from the very minute that our two minds wuz made up to go to Saratoga Josiah Allen wuz set on havin' sunthin new and uneek in the way of dress and whiskers' (25)). Resistant in principle to the idea of 'water curing them dumb corns' (21), Josiah is quickly persuaded of the virtues of an 'Everlastin' spring' (432-433) and even takes up the quintessential watering-place pastime of flirtation ("I would tear a man lim from lim, if I see him a tryin' to flirt with you [...] But [...] men *have* to do things sometimes, that they know is too hard for their pardners to do" (234-5)).

This last quotation, in which Josiah glibly (or cunningly) reframes dereliction as duty, captures the thrust of Holley's irony. Samantha's husband, untiring and pragmatic of impulse at work, is an infant in the sphere of social performance—to which Saratoga, dominated by women and notions rather than men and actions, belongs. Samantha's intermediate position—as a farm wife she is used to straddling the domains of economic and social upkeep—allows her to avoid Josiah's lapses (and ultimately to rescue him from Saratoga's grasp). *Samantha at Saratoga*, which Linda Morris has read as 'a full-fledged attack on the values and ideology of the genteel society', seeks to redeem the puritan work ethic, both by marking it out from capitalist accumulation (which risks making

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<sup>40</sup> See Beecher, *Seven Lectures to Young Men* (Indianapolis: Thomas B. Cutler, 1844), p. 20.

busy-ness a means rather than a sanctified end) and by offering self-effacing graft as a bulwark against indoctrination into a burgeoning culture of consumption.<sup>41</sup>

Finally on the subject of Saratoga narratives—a famous name. William Dean Howells, whose stories of the American leisure diaspora in Europe situate him alongside Twain, James, Hawthorne and Irving as a crucial chronicler of the United States’s psychic wrangling with the Old World, is also the only canonical American writer to have finished a novel about a domestic watering place.<sup>42</sup> *An Open-Eyed Conspiracy: an Idyl of Saratoga* (1897), has a strong metafictional bent: where Sophie Sparkle’s account of how textually engendered expectation intrudes upon the experience of Saratoga is gently suggestive, Howells is more direct. “‘Why has nobody done a story about Saratoga?’” asks a character (himself a fiction writer) early in the novel.<sup>43</sup> This remark sets the tone for a work that engages explicitly with what Peter Brown has described as the ‘disparity between [fiction’s] vivid evocation [of a place], and [its] reality’.

As Brown observes, such a disjunction can ‘produce a sadness, a sense of absence and loss [as when Proust’s Marcel] gazes at the soot-blackened image of the Virgin at Balbec’.<sup>44</sup> Struck by just such a feeling during a stay at Saratoga Springs, Basil March, an archetypal Howellsian focalizer (grey-bearded, vicarious) who also appears in *Their Wedding Journey* (1871), *The Shadow of a Dream* (1890) and *Hither and Thither in Germany* (1920) among other works, gets up a romantic ‘idyl’ on behalf of a pretty but provincial fellow vacationer, his plan being to reproduce in her experience of the resort his own discursively inscribed expectations of it (‘One imagines a heroine coming here and having the most magnificent kind of social career [...] and going back to De Witt Point with a dozen offers of marriage’; 76).

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<sup>41</sup> *Women Vernacular Humorists in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York; London: Garland, 1988), p. 157.

<sup>42</sup> James’s 1870 sketches ‘Saratoga’ and ‘Newport’ and his evocation of the latter resort in Chapter 6 of *The American Scene* (1905) have no counterpart in the fiction until the late, uncompleted *The Ivory Tower*, set at Newport in the Gilded Age.

<sup>43</sup> Howells, *An Open-Eyed Conspiracy* (London: Harper & Bros, 1897), p. 68. Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Brown, ‘Introduction’, in *Literature and Place, 1800-2000*, ed. by Brown and Michael Irwin (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 13-24 (p. 17).

The comic circularity of the whole enterprise (a novelist creating a narrative about the attempt to create a narrative that satisfies fictionally inscribed expectations) anticipates the sense of infinite refraction that characterizes some postmodern fiction (in an American context I am thinking of texts like John Barth's 'Lost in the Funhouse' (1968), but *An Open-Eyed Conspiracy* also withstands comparison with the late twentieth- and twenty-first century spa texts by Tsypkin, Chatwin and Sebald that I discuss in Chapter 4). But Howells is as interested in how *experience* (in the sense of advancing years) impinges on *experience* (how the world is seen) as he is in the related question of what representation does to place. In lamenting the 'promise of social brilliancy that Saratoga no more keeps than she does that of her other characteristic aspects' (45), Basil ruefully exposes himself as both an escapist reader of fiction and as married middle-aged man for whom life has never quite delivered from the point of view of emotionally piquant adventure. It is his 'grief' (in truth his narration is detached and amused throughout) at the prospect of Julia Gage 'being disappointed of a good time' (19) that prompts him, with the help of his wife Isabel, to try to model for the young woman a Saratoga that, if it ever existed, both quite understand to belong to an irretrievable past. (Their well-meant 'conspiracy' takes on the air of metafictional farce when Kendricks, the aforementioned writer, himself falls for Julia Gage.)

Unlike Jennie E. Hicks's spa-goers in *Sparkles from Saratoga*, and as the title of Howells's novel suggests, Basil and Isabel are under no illusions about the truth value of their idealizing proposition. The attempt to reconcile Saratoga with its simulacra (Basil refers to the resort as 'one of the most delightful *spectacles* in the world', part of a 'good old American *act*'; 6; 39; my italics) amounts to a conscious retreat from good-natured disappointment into good-natured reverie. In wishing to 'spread a beatific haze over [Saratoga]' and 'throw dust in [Julia's] beautiful eyes' (78), they signal their conviction that the immaterial dream of place, figured in the 'sparkles', the 'dust' or the 'haze' cast by repeated mediation, is worth recording even in the absence of an objective correlative. Basil March is one of Howells's more straightforwardly autobiographical narrators; and *An*

*Open-Eyed Conspiracy* offers, amongst other things, an apology for the devious real-world agency of the storyteller.

Unlike Howells's focalizer, Miss Gage's relatives are naïve enough to 'believe that Saratoga [is] still the centre of American fashion which it once was' (15). For Basil, this belief confirms the simulacral status of 'fashionable' watering-place culture in an era of mass tourism: whatever its past, the Saratoga of *An Open-Eyed Conspiracy* exists primarily to service the anachronistic fantasies bred in 'small manufacturing center[s] in western Massachusetts or southern Vermont or central New York' (6). Resolutely undecadent themselves, such provincial visitors nonetheless scan the horizon for evidence that they are socializing alongside the United States's mythically lavish Upper Ten Thousand.

Howells's Saratoga is a glaring, anachronistic pastiche, both architecturally (its public spaces are dominated by 'Grecian' temples and 'Armenian' bazaars) and conceptually. To hammer the point home, he has Basil and Isabel attend a theatrical performance of Ellen Wood's blockbusting 1861 novel *East Lynne* (set partly at a fictional German spa) in which the actors aim 'not at the imitation of our nature, but at the imitation of our convention (104)'. *An Open-Eyed Conspiracy* can be read pessimistically (for Howells, the pathos of both reading and memory lies in the impossibility of authentic rapprochement with the subject matter). But the novel also lends itself to the more comforting conclusion that bourgeois culture, belated and image-driven, at least affords the leisure for harmless projection.

#### Between Complexity and Completism: Rendering Narrative Space in the Nineteenth Century

The intertextual matrix that helped install the Continental spa as a topic in discourse in the second half of the nineteenth century drew from and fed back into an inventory of tropes associated with domestic resort culture—and so far in this chapter I have tried to sketch some of the most important among these tropes. But—of course—the manner in which writers approached places like Baden-Baden at mid-century was also informed by a more abstract complex of

transnational aesthetic and epistemological trends, which, in accordance with what Leszek Kołakowski has described as ‘the basic [Kantian] duality [...] whereby we assimilate the world, at one and the same time, as legislators and as passive subjects’, both gave shape to and found expression in the era’s characteristic narrative forms.<sup>45</sup>

I will only briefly address here a subject—paradigms in narrative space—well covered in scholarship ranging from Bakhtin’s 1937-38 essay on the chronotope through to classic studies of realism by Erich Auerbach (*Mimesis*, 1946) and Ian Watt (*The Rise of the Novel*, 1957) to a recent monograph by Rosa Mucignat (*Realism and Space in the Novel*, 2013). My main concern is to mark (and illustrate, if only impressionistically) several ways in which narratives operating in a broadly realist tradition can seem to me to bear the traces of pressure to pull in more than one direction at once when it comes to the rendering of settings.

One such point of tension, which might be described as sociological in spirit, relates to a disjunction between a concern to do justice to landscapes as the products of human agency and the inverse imperative to communicate the extent to which human environments are the arbiters of human outcomes. Another, more obviously formal, involves the expectation that writers should both attend both to the complexity and special interconnectedness of modern (and particularly urban) spatial experience while at the same time ‘realizing’ named settings and spatial relationships to a high degree of synoptic totality. Thinking about such collisions seems to me to be a way of beginning to approach the question, tackled more less abstractly by way of resort culture in the chapters that follow, of exactly what ethical complexion can be put on the indisputably more vivid manifestation of space in narrative in the second half of the long nineteenth century.

The growth in material consistency and visibility of narrative space traced over the *longue durée* by Bakhtin in ‘Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel’ (‘Formy vremeni i khronotopa v romane’) is usually accepted as having

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<sup>45</sup> Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. by P.S. Falla (London: W.S. Norton and Company, 2005), p. 45.



reached its apotheosis in the period 1850-1900. French naturalism as exemplified by Zola's Rougon-Macquart series and the London of Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891) ('he went by train to King's Cross and thence walked up Pentonville Hill to Upper Street') epitomize a thickening of fiction's topographical line rightly associated with the example of Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*, but which, as Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* makes clear, is already in evidence in English fiction of the eighteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Russian literature, for which Pushkin's novel in verse *Evgenii Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*, 1825) represents a landmark in terms of the rendering palpable of narrative space, zooms in significantly on its settings in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the universalising-anonymizing Gogolian 'town of N.' (in *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*, 1842)) being supplanted as the paradigmatic case by Dostoevskii's 'S--- Street' and 'K--- Bridge' (in *Crime and Punishment* (*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, 1866)), in which the dashes are easily decipherable by reference to other clues embedded in a highly realised cityscape. Ivan Turgenev's novels of the 1860s and 1870s, including *Smoke* (*Dym*, 1867), set largely at Baden-Baden, open almost without exception in line with the following formula: 'In [this scenic part] of [a named town, city or rural administrative division] on [this day] of [this season] of [this year]'.

Rosa Mucignat's study of realism and narrative space is attentive to such developments, noting that between the middle of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth century 'novelistic geography gradually loses the abstractness and mere functionality it had in earlier incarnations of the novel and acquires materiality, complexity and dynamism'.<sup>47</sup> Mucignat draws a useful contrast between fictional space in its prior, significantly 'decorative' and 'ecphrastic' manifestations and a new spatio-representational dispensation characterized by three principal strands: the heightened 'visibility' and 'material consistency' of settings, achieved by virtue of 'close observation'; an increase in narrative 'depth', evidenced in the representation of places as staging a wealth of 'intersecting plot lines'; and a greater degree and complexity of 'movement' between narrative

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<sup>46</sup> Gissing, *New Grub Street*, ed. by Bernard Bergonzi (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 290.

<sup>47</sup> Mucignat, *Realism and Space in the Novel, 1795-1869* (London: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1-2. Further references in parenthesis.

settings, resulting in the bringing to light of heterogeneous relationships between a 'heterogeneity of locales' (5-7). As Mucignat concludes, '[t]he space of realist novels is dense with social connotations and complicated by a multiplication of actors and contexts' (36).

But there is a sense in which this analysis, or at least the slant Mucignat puts on it, does not tell the whole story about narrative space in the middle of the nineteenth century. Franco Moretti has written perceptively, in a study of European fictional geographies since 1800, of the settings of literature coming to constitute not 'inert container[s]' in which narratives 'happen', but 'active force[s] pervad[ing] the literary field and shaping its depth'; and, while Mucignat puts a fairly one-sided spin on this development, Moretti's work on place and fiction is rather more alive to the ambivalences of (here I cite Bakhtin's famous terms from 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel') 'space becom[ing] charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history'.<sup>48</sup> On the one hand, such language seems to want to register, even a little tendentiously, the evolution of a progressively subtler, more empirically verisimilar and more finely tuned collective spatial consciousness. But, as Moretti recognises, the idea of settings as more 'active', 'visible' and 'charged' can equally speak to the recrudescence or strengthening of a kind of charismatic spatial symbolism (London as the enveloping metropolis, bathing resorts as dens of vice) and it is not abundantly clear to me that the evidence of the realist episteme gainsays such a conclusion.

One of Mucignat's claims for realism seems especially overcooked:

[R]ealist novels undermine any stable univocal relation between settings and events. Other genres such as the Gothic novel or crime fiction instead rely on one-to-one correspondences: a gloomy castle is certain to hide some terrible mystery [...] But [...] the space of nineteenth-century novels is filled with animation and a sense of open possibility that makes it impossible to pin down a single plot pattern [...]

(23)

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<sup>48</sup> Moretti, *Atlas*, p. 3; Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 84-258 (p. 84).

Leaving aside for a moment the question of whether the realist novel can be termed a 'genre' in the same way as 'crime fiction' or 'the Gothic novel', the dozens or hundreds of watering place narratives surveyed for this study clearly evidence the survival into the age of realism of consistent spatial 'plot patterns'—not only in popular journalism and 'sensation' novels, whose poetics Mucignat, judging from her opinion of detective stories, might be inclined to bar from the realist temple, but also in canonical realism (Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, George Eliot, Henry James). Such patterns, indeed, structure the chapters to follow (in their absence the heuristic of a 'watering-place text' would make much less sense).

'Animation' and 'patterning' can look on careful reflection like the terms of a questionable dichotomy: as Francis Mulhern (cited in my Introduction), understands, 'established terms of treatment' are an essential condition of a subject's topicality—the guarantor of an interpretative channel linking author and reader and thus, arguably, the bedrock upon which the ethical and aesthetic efficacy of narrative is founded. That places influence human outcomes and that certain types of place influence human outcomes in special ways is, moreover an intuitive insight conditioning narrative practice in any period (though nineteenth-century social thought certainly played a major part in giving form and flesh to the notion).

*Pace* Mucignat, a broadly realist aesthetics might even be held to foster the positing of a 'stable univocal relation between settings and events'. As I suggest in the next chapter, the decryption and diagnosis of resort culture's ethical meaning(s) (often, in practice, understood singularly) emerges as a major hermeneutic priority of post-1840 writing about watering places. This divulgent trend reflects the interest in the 'assimilation of the other' that Lawrence Schehr has identified as among the primary rhetorical concerns of writing in the realist mode.<sup>49</sup> Assimilation, which describes a system's absorption and integration of a foreign object, is a concept easily laden with ideological value; and Schehr's study pursues this line, taking issue with the chauvinistic and difference-suppressing

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<sup>49</sup> *Figures of Alterity: French Realism and its Others* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), x; ix.

tendencies of mid-century French realism. But the desire to ‘lay bare’ or ‘get to the bottom’ of a new topic is not in itself a blameworthy (indeed, it is a hermeneutically vital) assimilative instinct—though it can have problematic consequences when the spirit of disclosure boils over, as it can, into hard and fast typologization and the sense of an insurmountable spirit of place (‘[Y]ou know all about it and what one does[...]’).

Besides the laying bare of underlying meanings—see Chapter 2—and the elaboration of unifying tropes—discussed in Chapter 3—another standard type of assimilative narrative work, as I have already suggested in this chapter, is the drawing of one-to-one equivalences. When an 1845 Murray’s guide book likens Wiesbaden waters to ‘chicken broth’, the intent and effect are predominantly humorous. But when an 1870 edition of the same guide compares the resort to Margate, the statement’s force is sooner pragmatic and orientative.<sup>50</sup> These two examples help convey the range of function of the familiar analogue, a significant weapon in the armory of popular print culture as it went about mapping, on behalf of mid-nineteenth century readers, those points in space which the human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan would in the late twentieth-century coin the term ‘the unperceived field’ (that is, ‘[the] fuzzy area of defective knowledge surrounding the empirically known’) in order to describe.<sup>51</sup>

Yet by a similar token to that which dictates that the effectiveness of a simile owes as much to the non-likenesses of the articles compared as to what they have in common, the attempt to bridge difference by invoking that which is itself mostly different to the object of representation estranges and dematerializes that object even as it brings it nearer to sight. Such effects call to mind Baudrillard’s (provocative, much-maligned and -abused, but in my view highly suggestive from the perspective of intertextuality) analysis of how the signs that we use to model the world to ourselves and others have, with the advance of (post-)modernity, effectively supplanted the referents for which we still assume

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<sup>50</sup> *Murray’s Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* (London: John Murray, 1845); *Murray’s Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*. (London: John Murray, 1870), p. 226.

<sup>51</sup> Tuan. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press. 1977), pp. 86-88.

them to stand. Indeed, in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard locates the origins of contemporary ‘hyperreality’ in the ‘serial-technical’ transformations of the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> The tenor of a print culture that could simultaneously install Baden-Baden as the Saratoga of Germany and Saratoga as the Baden-Baden of America—epitomizing the primacy of what Baudrillard, in an ironic adaptation of Marx’s term, calls ‘exchange value’—can at times feel less integrative and absorptive than recursive.

Among the nineteenth century’s interpretative master codes—and a counterpoint to its ambience of discursive ramification—is the Hegelian postulate that social and natural phenomena are possessed of an underlying identity or coherence that stands in need of revelation and realization through language.<sup>53</sup> In *Appearance and Reality* (1893), the English philosopher F.H. Bradley (1846-1924) gives voice to the frustrations of the task:

We have found, so far, that we have not been able to arrive at reality. The various ways, in which things have been taken up, have all failed to give more than mere appearance. Whatever we have tried has turned out something which, on investigation, has been proved to contradict itself. But that which does not attain to internal unity, has clearly stopped short of genuine reality. And [...] to sit down contented is impossible, unless, that is, we are resolved to put up with mere confusion [...]<sup>54</sup>

Positivism, which, as Cheryl B. Welch has observed, threatened at times to manifest as the ‘key to all [...] mythologies’ in Victorian intellectual life, evinces similar preoccupations to Bradley. As Welch continues, ‘[k]ey terms that reappear incessantly in Comte’s formulations [...] are ‘unify’, ‘connect’ and ‘make whole [...L]ike Hegel, he exhibited a compulsive need to resolve contradictions

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<sup>52</sup> Baudrillard, ‘Symbolic Exchange and Death’ in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), p. 138.

<sup>53</sup> On interpretation as a question of master codes, see Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 110.

and restore coherence to every realm of human experience'.<sup>55</sup> Comte and Bradley's valorization of self-consistency or 'internal unity' and Bradley's conflation of unity with a 'reality' that he consistently (Platonically) represents as the pole of 'appearance' are rhetorical moves also discoverable in the sphere of aesthetic judgment in the second half of the nineteenth century. In favourably reviewing George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), for example, the *Westminster Review* noted that 'the gift which perhaps most of all distinguishes genius from ordinary mortals, is the power of seeing realities where the latter see only appearance'. Eliot's command of this power, the article goes on, means that '[her protagonists'] lives are notable for that organic cohesion and consistency which distinguish actual-existences'.<sup>56</sup>

*Adam Bede*, then, is credited for 'seeing' past 'appearance' to 'realities'. But in acknowledging the plurality of the latter, the review's author also registers that 'cohesion' and 'consistency', if truly to be found in narratives and life, are not available on prescription. Moreover, assuming that a given 'reality'—a given 'unity' in the terms of the Bradleyan ontological logic we are again working with here—should reveal itself to an author, there remains the knotty matter of conveying it. *Adam Bede* takes up this difficulty. Foreshadowing J. Alfred Prufrock's 'It is impossible to say just what I mean!' but stressing the perplexities of communication rather than expression, Eliot's narrator accompanies a scene-setting description of the village of Hayslope with the admission, as much exhilarated as despairing, that 'I could never make you know what I meant by a bright spring day'.<sup>57</sup>

'Seeing' and 'making known': that Eliot's last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, stands out in her oeuvre has much to do with the strong sense which pervades it that to treat perceiving and showing (or 'making known') as distinct acts or tasks is to set up a barrier to 'realistic' (in the sense of adequate-to-experience)

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<sup>55</sup> Cheryl B. Welch, 'Social Science from the Revolution to Positivism', in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. by Gareth Steadman-Jones and Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 171-199 (pp. 198; 187).

<sup>56</sup> Unsigned, 'Adam Bede. By George Eliot', *The Westminster Review*, 15, (1859), p. 487.

<sup>57</sup> *Adam Bede*, 3 vols (London: Blackwood & Sons, 1859), 1, p. 153. Further references in parenthesis; T.S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *The Wasteland, Prufrock and Other Poems* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1988) pp. 1-5 (p. 4).

representation. Certainly, *Daniel Deronda* dispenses to a greater extent than Eliot's other novels with what might be called 'assimilative' realistic technique.

For example, in describing the gaming room at the (fictional) resort of Leubronn in the text's opening passage, Eliot—in contrast to the clean allegorical lines drawn by some of the mid-century casino narratives I discuss in Chapter 3—deploys the estranging (in the Shklovskiiian sense) figure of a giant respiratory 'condenser'.

[Gwendolyn] was occupied in gambling [...] in one of those splendid resorts which the enlightenment of ages has prepared for the same species of pleasure at a heavy cost of guilt mouldings, dark-toned color and chubby nudities, all correspondingly heavy—forming a suitable condenser for human breath belonging, in great part, to the highest fashion, and not easily procurable to be breathed in elsewhere in the like proportion, at least by persons of little fashion.<sup>58</sup>

Navigating sinuously between vivid sensory detail, abstracting socio-structural commentary and a metaphoricity at once scientific and oneiric (I am put in mind of Malthus, of Joseph Wright of Derby's painting *An Experiment with a Bird in the Air Pump* (1768) but also of shrine kitsch) Eliot's undulant, single-sentence evocation of gambling-room sociability is about as far from being unkempt as it is from being crisp. One might suggest such an introduction—which is so unlike, for example, Eliot's determinedly *expository* focalization of Hayslope through the eyes of a visiting 'stranger' at the beginning of *Adam Bede*—as a payoff of the recognition, announced part way through the latter text, that 'I could never make you know what I mean by a bright spring day!'. Eliot's last novel, especially when read alongside her first, seems to broadcast a new representational fealty to the sensory and ratiocinatory progress of the peculiar perceiver over and above the hypothetical understanding of 'any chance comer' (*AB*, 2).

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<sup>58</sup> *Daniel Deronda*, 4 vols (London: Blackwood & Sons, 1876), 1, p. 4.

In any event, by the point in *Daniel Deronda*'s opening passage at which she introduces the casino at Leubronn, Eliot's narrator has already invoked 'the make-believe of a [narrative] beginning' (*Adam Bede*, by contrast, undertakes '[w]ith a single drop of ink for a mirror [...] to reveal [...] far reaching visions of the past'; 2) and seeded her account of Gwendolen Harleth gambling—based, apparently, on Eliot's observation of Byron's grand-niece Geraldine Leigh laying bets at Homburg—with unresolved binary possibility ('Was she beautiful or not beautiful? [...] Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams?').<sup>59</sup> Eliot's spa text lets the perplexity and non-identity of Leubronn and its associated practices stand; apart from anything else (and this manifests itself above all in relation to Daniel's Jewishness) the novel marks the high point of her professional reluctance to chop the Gordian knots represented by unclubbable social and cultural forms.

By contrast, much writing, fictional and journalistic, of the period of Eliot's authorship registers exactly such a divulgent and diagnostic attunement when it comes to resort culture. In the next chapter, I try to mark the appeal of—and rhetorical ways toward—the resolvents that *Daniel Deronda* turns down.

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<sup>59</sup> See Kathleen MacCormack, 'George Eliot: Poetry, Fiction and European Spas'. 'George Eliot: Poetry, Fiction and European Spas' in *Journal of European Studies*, 40, (2009), 9-22 (p. 14); *Daniel Deronda*, p. 3.



## **Chapter 2**

‘The scenery is good but the people are detestable’:  
Duality Laid Bare

It was a strange ordinance of the age that made watering-places equally the resort of the sick and the fashionable, the dyspeptic and the dissipated. One cannot readily see by what magic chalybeates can minister to a mind diseased, nor how sub-carbonates and proto-chlorides may compensate to the faded spirit of an *ennuyée* fine lady for the bygone delights of a London or a Paris season; much less, through what magnetic influence gambling and gossip can possibly alleviate affections of the liver, or roulette be made a medical agent in the treatment of chronic rheumatism.<sup>1</sup>

To deem something good, I must always know what sort of a thing the object is intended to be.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Lever, *Arthur O'Leary: His Wanderings and Ponderings in Many Lands*, 3 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1844), 3, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by James Creed Meredith, ed. by Nicholas Walker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 39.

There is no one here who is seriously ill—they all come to enjoy themselves’ (‘Zdes’ net nikogo, kto byl by ser’ezno bolen. Vse priezzhaiut siuda, chtoby razvlech’siia’), wrote Nikolai Gogol’ from Baden-Baden in 1836.<sup>3</sup> ‘[I]t is quite obvious to even an unobservant individual that the majority of these visitors are not ill’, concurred the *British Medical Journal*’s correspondent in the same resort four years before the First World War.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter I trace a long-lived cliché diachronically and across formal and national lines. In doing so I register a (counterintuitive) rhetorical kinship between the charge of hypocrisy, which appeals to a binary or ‘zero-sum’ conception of truth and ethics, and the *idée fixe*, a testament to the strong hermeneutic pull—Thomas Hardy describes in *The Well Beloved* (1897) ‘[t]he unconscious habit, common to many people, of tracing likes in unlikes’—of the explanation that leaves previous explanations intact.<sup>5</sup>

Over eight decades—and in fact it endures in later twentieth- and twenty-first century writing, including scholarship—the idea of a disjunction between (therapeutic) watering-place appearances and (hedonistic) watering-place reality unites innumerable, disparately conceived accounts of resort culture. The gap between sign and signified that identifies deceit thus becomes, paradoxically, one of the transparent propositions that holds the nineteenth-century’s watering-place text together. The transnational narrative predilection of industrial modernity for disclosure and decryption when it came to water resorts is, I will suggest, an overdetermined phenomenon. On the one hand, it is an easy (if significant) step from the benign duality of a venue serving, in Bernard Toulhier’s terms, ‘cette double aspiration de l’homme: éviter la maladie, fuir l’ennui’ (‘that double aspiration of mankind: to avoid sickness and escape boredom’), to accusations of duplicity and sham.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the consistency with which texts turn to the charge of latency hints at a more generalizable rhetorics of

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Evgenii Pazukhin & Elena Zhavoronkova, *Budem delat’ Baden-Baden: bytie kul’turnogo mifa* (Baden-Baden: Rendezvous Verlag, 2003), p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> Unsigned, ‘Baden-Baden as a Health Resort’, *The British Medical Journal*, 1, (1910), p. 1003.

<sup>5</sup> Hardy, *The Well-Beloved: A Sketch of a Temperament*, ed. by Jane Thomas (Ware: Wordsworth, 2000), p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Toulhier, ‘Les villes d’eaux en France (1850-1914): espaces urbains et architectures publiques’, in *Spas in Britain and in France in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Annick Cossic and Patrick Galliou (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006.), pp. 69-94 (p. 69).

topicality: the impetus first to lay bare, expose, unconceal—and then to give univocal narrative and ethical shape to what is unveiled.

‘Almost the only honest portion are hypochondriacs’: Spa Liars from Vladimir Grech to Violet Hunt

The literary commonplace of watering-place hypocrisy enjoys such a wide temporal, spatial and formal spread in the long nineteenth century that it is difficult to historicize it with any final conviction. But stories of spa liars do invite division into two rough types, which might be termed the ‘deceivers-and-dupes’ model; and the ‘lie-of-mutual-convenience’ plot. Here I want to mark the progress of these two kinds of metanarrative, the second of which seems incrementally to displace the first in the decades after mid-century, and in doing so start untangling the relationships between the rhetorical and narratological dynamics of dualistic narratives and the social and ideological values they articulate.

Alexandrina Crosbie leaves for Baden-Baden at the end of Anthony Trollope’s *The Small House at Allington* (1864) because making ‘a long visit—a very long visit’ to a foreign spa represents a socially palatable form of marital separation (‘She would not be parted from her husband, or at least not so parted that the world should suppose that they had quarrelled’).<sup>7</sup> In George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, the life and death of Lydgate’s idealism are figured in his first disparaging and later emulating the mercenary opportunism of a fellow physician who ‘practis[es] at a German bath, and has married a rich patient’. At his decease, Lydgate leaves an ‘excellent practice, alternating, according to the season, between London and a Continental bathing-place; having written a treatise on Gout, a disease which has a good deal of wealth on its side’.<sup>8</sup> A caricature published in the Moscow satirical newspaper *The Alarm Clock* (*Budil’nik*) in 1873 [see Fig. 5] depicts two women, one of them a

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<sup>7</sup> *The Small House at Allington*, 3 vols (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1864), 2, p. 270. News of Lady Alexandrina’s death at Baden-Baden is communicated in Trollope’s *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867).

<sup>8</sup> *Middlemarch, A Study of Provincial Life*, 4 vols (London: Blackwood & Sons, 1873), 1, p. 263; 3, p. 459.



Fig. 5: Without Spectacles: "And what effect did Vichy have on you?"  
With Spectacles: "Outstanding! Prince Andrei has begun to court Zina."  
Unsigned, 'Na mineral'nykh vodakh', *Budil'nik*, No 29 (27 July 1873), p. 3.

matchmaker, discussing their respective summers: “And what effect did Vichy have on you?” (“A kak na vas podeistvovali Vichy?”), asks the first. “Outstanding!” (“Kak nel’zia luchshe”), replies the matchmaker, “[P]rince Andrei has begun to court Zina” (“[K]niaz’ Andrei uzhe nachal ukhazhivat’ za Zinoi”).<sup>9</sup>

As the above synopses suggest, much writing on spas from the 1860s and 1870s takes for granted the idea that the water cure is a racket of one sort or another, often either stating or implying the existence of a right-minded consensus on the issue. As such, narratives from these decades frequently either omit to describe therapeutic regimen or are sardonic or condescending about (as James puts it with unwonted brusqueness in his 1873 travel sketch ‘Homburg Reformed’ before granting that his notions about spas are conditioned by ‘antique prejudice’) ‘the stupid people who get up at six o’clock to drink the waters’.<sup>10</sup>

The tenor of such judgments, always wavering between marking cure patrons’ victimhood and implying their collusion in a sham (but tending increasingly toward the latter), survives as twentieth-century historiographical prejudice. Christopher Hamlin, discussing English watering places of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, finds that modern historians—under the unconscious influence, perhaps, of High Victorian-era scepticism—have been excessively ready to make the sociologically narrow assumption that

the success of a spa was a function of the company one found there, and that this company was utterly frivolous, little concerned with health or disease, or with the contents of the waters and glad to throw money at quacks whose inordinate claims provided the pretence for the spa in the first place [...]<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Unsigned, ‘Na mineral’nykh vodakh’, *Budil’nik*, 27 July 1873, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Homburg Reformed’ (1873), in *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent* (New York: Library of America, 1993), pp. 635-643 (p. 635).

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Hamlin, ‘Chemistry, Medicine, and the Legitimization of the English Spa, 1740-1840’, in Porter (ed.), *Medical History*, pp. 67-81 (p. 67).

Writing from *before* 1850 tends, by contrast, to take seriously the question of whether or not the water cure represents an authentic and effective means of resolving bodily suffering and to assume that most cure-seekers did the same.

This is not to suggest that such texts or their authors are in any sense more credulous about medicine or human nature than those that followed. Rather, early post-Romantic travel narratives (especially diaristic and epistolary ones, these modes being well suited to the representation of knowledge as an unfolding) seem to find offended sincerity (and its cousin anti-pastoral disillusionment) a more comfortable narrative temper to inhabit than do some of their descendants. In 1834 the English traveller and eccentric William Beckford was ‘appalled’ to ‘ma[k]e the discovery’ that the ‘little sequestered paradise’ of Bad Ems was ‘full of idlers [and] billiard players’;<sup>12</sup> High Victorian-era periodical journalism in particular, with the generalization valid for Russian and American as well as British writing, tends to avoid such rhetorical moves (the age’s reputation for earnestness and literalism notwithstanding) and to favour a more urbane genus of expository gesture: the debunking of commercial claims through irony, for example; or the divulgence (rather than ingenuous discovery) of hypocrisy from a position of implied omniscience.

An 1835 account of Baden-Baden by the Russian journalist and publicist Nikolai Grech (1787-1867)—later the editor, with Faddei Bulgarin, of the patriotic journal *Son of the Fatherland* (*Syn otechestva*)—helps illustrate the point I am trying to make about early resort narratives and disclosure as a rhetorical work of shock and oppositions. After initially praising the Black Forest resort as a ‘marvelous place with all the conveniences of society life’ ([p]relestnoe mesto [...] so vsemi udobstvami svetskoi zhizni’), Grech is stricken, within two days of his arrival, by the realization that the cure is a pretext for levity and display: ‘[t]he mineral waters are the last thing people think about. No-one talks about illnesses [...] They come here to enjoy themselves [...] to play roulette [...] to socialize with their friends’ (‘mineral’nye vody – poslednee delo. Nikto ne govorit o bolezniakh [...] Siuda priezzhauiut veselit’sia’ [...] igrat’ v ruletku, videt’sia c priiatel’iami [...]).

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<sup>12</sup> William Beckford, *The Travel Diaries of William Beckford of Fonthill*, 2 vols (Cambridge : Constable and Co., 1928), 1, p. 45

He leavens his sense of outrage with unsubstantiated anecdote: '[D]eceitful tricks' ('plutnii') abound at Baden-Baden, as do 'people just begging for a slap in the face' ('liudi, kotorye tak i naprashivaiutsia na poshchechinu'), and '[i]t very often happens that gamblers have their purses swiped from their pockets' ('[O]chen' chasto sluchaetsia, chto u igraushchikh vytaskivaiut koshel'ki iz karmanov').<sup>13</sup>

Reading on, we might be forgiven for deciding that Grech's catalogue of watering-place dishonesty carries its own hidden agenda, namely to juxtapose the lamentable moral atmosphere of the German spa with the spirit of a more authentic locus (Russia). From his disappointment with Baden-Baden, Grech turns directly to an account of a conversation, held at the baths, with the German soprano Sabina Heinefetter (1809-1872). Heinefetter is made to speak with ravishment of a recent visit to St. Petersburg ("Russia! Russia! As long as I live I will never forget you!") ("Rossiia! Rossiia! Dokol' ia zhiva, ne zabudu tebia!") and her encomium opens the way for the author to pin his own patriotic credentials to the mast ('You can imagine with what pleasure I listened to this!') ('Mozhete voobrazit', c kakim udovol'stviiem ia eto slushal!') (212).

Grech's letters from Baden-Baden thus accommodate the rudiments of a rhetorical conceit given more flesh by Vasilii Avenarius's 1867 novella *The Contemporary Idyll* (see Chapter 5), in which the Continental spa functions as a synecdoche for Western Europe and phony and deceitful conduct at the baths accordingly figures the malignant subtlety of European manners. In both texts resort culture, glossed as a hedonistic free-for-all, suffers by only-just implicit comparison with 'Russian' self-consistency and so helps stoke patriotic *amour propre*. For all its raffish colour—gamblers, idlers, pickpockets—Grech's Baden-Baden is a signifier that also points persistently away from itself.

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<sup>13</sup>Nikolai Grech, *Pis'ma s dorogi po Germanii, Shvetsarii i Italii* (St. Petersburg, 1843), pp. 208-209. Further references in parenthesis. Grech's travelling notes were first published in the conservative periodical *The Northern Bee* (*Severnaia pchela*), which Bulgarin and Grech also edited together.



Victorian satirical journalism, which conceived a strong interest in Continental spas at mid-century, also deals significantly in conceptual oppositions (dupes/deceivers, surface/interior, appearance/reality) when describing them. But (and this change of inflection registers, apart from anything else, a stage in travel's bathetic transmutation into tourism) there is usually little shock or awe in such accounts. From the 1840s German watering places in particular tend to figure in English periodical culture as comic staples, their defining features written into cultural familiarity. Humorous diatribes like the following, from an 1858 issue of *Punch*, helped inscribe the metanarrative of spa duality for English readers at a time when the paper's circulation and cultural penetration were growing quickly:

An advertisement headed 'Baths of Homburg' and purporting to be put forward by persons who style themselves directors whether of the baths or the general arrangements of the watering-place, enumerates amongst its various attractions 'the magnificent Casino' [...] It requires some immoral courage to advertise a gambling house in a country where such a place in the eye of [...] everyone who is not a fool, is regarded as a den of thieves [...] Why should [the directors] not go onto say that the Casino of Homburg affords, in the gambling department, a supplement to the waters, enabling all parties to get themselves completely cleaned-out [...] Care is said to be the constant companion of riches; and doubtless at Homburg as well as at Baden-Baden, Spa, Ems and all the other Continental resorts of people of whom almost the only honest portion are hypochondriacs, anybody not himself belonging to the billiard-marker and blackleg class, would soon be in the enjoyment of abstraction from the cares of the world in so far as those cares are occasioned by his money, and are removable by the abstraction thereof from his pocket.<sup>14</sup>

The above passage teems with latency and doubleness: embedded clauses imputing deceit ('purporting to be put forward'; 'who style themselves directors'); puns conflating casino and bath-house ('cleaned out'); dichotomous formulations ('immoral courage'); and a compound libel painting those rare *Kurgäste* of candid intent as engaged in self-delusion ('almost the only honest portion are hypochondriacs'). Chicanery being an inherently social affair (conmen are

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<sup>14</sup> Unsigned, 'A Flat's Paradise', *Punch*, 11 September 1858, p. 105.

nothing without their marks), the author lingers on the individual or typological gullibility of watering-place patrons. Yet these are increasingly represented as a (fairly contemptible) literalizing minority. 'Blockheads at Baden', the title of an 1863 *Punch* article advising 'philosophers to whom it is meat and drink to find a fool' to make for 'that celebrated resort of sharpers and blacklegs' captures the astringent tone, the appellation 'philosopher' registering a degree of admiration for the worldly sang-froid of the watering-place scam artist even as those who fall for his tricks are made the object of disdain.

We might even mark in these two extracts the ghost of a felt affinity (felt on one side at least) between spa mountebankery and the sharp practice of the satirical correspondent.<sup>15</sup> The image of money 'abstract[ed]' from pockets, echoing (in a very different key) Grech's 1835 account of theft at Baden-Baden, also evokes the anti-establishmentarian delving into hidden seams that had been part of *Punch's* self-image upon its foundation in the 1840s but had fallen onto the back foot with the demise of more radical contributors like Douglas William Jerrold.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, as well as conflating casino and bathhouse for comic effect, the first of the two *Punch* extracts also threatens two significant conceptual elisions: between different resorts ('doubtless at Homburg as well as at Baden-Baden, Spa, Ems'—although Ems was by most accounts a sedate place); and between truth and report, with locutions such as 'regarded as'; 'said to be' serving (somewhat ironically in view of the article's overall drift against misleading presentation) to confirm the testimony they qualify rather than to undermine it.

It being an express part of *Punch's* remit to divulge cant, the magazine's take on the spa cannot be assumed to be representative of wider trends in Victorian periodical culture. In this case, however, far from fiddling on the

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<sup>15</sup> Unsigned, 'Blockheads at Baden-Baden', *Punch*, 19 September 1863, p. 121.

<sup>16</sup> Thackeray, whose sketches about English tourists abroad epitomized the gentler satirical dispensation that came to dominate *Punch* (and who would not have appreciated the term 'blockheads'), had resigned from the magazine in 1850 on the basis that 'I don't think I ought to pull any longer in the same boat with such a savage little Robespierre [as Jerrold]'. He later returned to the fold. See Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of A British Institution* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1997), p. 730.

margins, *Punch* was following the lead of less exposure-oriented arms of the London press. An October 1850 article from *Household Words*, for example, dispenses similar visions, weaving its attack on resort culture into a broader complaint on the foibles of the Modern Tourist. In Dickens's weekly, the English spa patron, whom 'cheap trains and cheap steamboats [have] lured' to the baths, is depicted as a slave to his guide book ('that ubiquitous red volume'). At John Murray's bidding, he 'picturesque[s]' every 'tumble-down place' he encounters in the environs of the spa. (Daytrips to medieval ruins, such as the Altes Schloss at Baden-Baden, were a customary part of a stay at a German water resort. Tolstoi's Masha undertakes such a trip in *Family Happiness*, as do the general's suite in Dostoevskii's *The Gambler* and the Dowells and Ashburnhams, from the cardiac resort of Bad Nauheim, in Ford's *The Good Soldier*.)

In *Household Words*' rendering of watering-place duality we see—implicitly and still quite dimly—misrepresentation and deceit credited with a structural or systematic character, with this narrative line foreshadowing, without resembling exactly, the lie-of-mutual-convenience plot that rescues Anthony Trollope's Lady Alexandrina from embarrassment and undergirds Lydgate's nice little earner. Spa tourists are still preponderantly represented as the middle-class dupes of individual charlatans with water cures, books or voyages to sell—but the accretion of related transactions hints at the operation of a commercial cabal, 'luring' its victims from page to waters via steamboat and railway. Most striking among the links in this faintly-delineated chain are the parties referred to in the piece's title as 'the modern robbers of the Rhine'. These last are not purse swipers in the Grechian mould, but patrician larceners: dukes and margraves with 'large appetites for pleasure [and] small stomachs for honest work', for whom water-drinking and bathing facilities and their attendant casinos represent profitable 'royal businesses'.<sup>17</sup>

Across a range of cultural forms, the disparagement of the judgment and ethics of notional third parties represents a standard way of binding addresser and addressee together as part of a more discerning knowledge community. Both

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<sup>17</sup> Unsigned, 'The Modern Robbers of the Rhine', *Household Words*, 19 October 1850, pp. 90-93.

the *Punch* and *Household Words* spa articles make a virtue of their (and by implication, their readers') acuity in spotting humbug. But this observation does not fully account for how little scope is granted in the above accounts to fortuitous, negotiated or market-driven social and economic processes as driving forces behind Continental resort culture. Structures, especially in the *Household Words* account, are faintly in sight, but personality remains the keynote.

*Arthur O' Leary: His Wanderings and Ponderings in Many Lands* (1844), one of several picaresque narratives the Anglo-Irish novelist and physician Charles Lever wrote on the back of his travels in Europe and Canada, also strikes such a tone—not ignoring structures, but tending to fabulize them. Taking leave from the fact that until German unification in 1871 many of Europe's most popular watering places were located in un- or semi-reconstructed medieval fiefdoms, Lever's Arthur O' Leary at times writes the spa as if it were a setting in one of ETA Hoffmann's feudal fairy tales rather than a modern(izing) commercial institution. Often he writes it as both at once. O' Leary accounts for the casino at Baden-Baden, for example, in terms of supply and demand *and* as the brainchild of ducal moneygrubbing:

[T]he Grand-Duchy [of Baden] produces little grain and less grass, has neither manufacture nor trade, nor the means of providing for other wants than those of a simple and hard-working peasantry. There is, however, a palace, with its accompaniments of grand maréchal, equerries, cooks, and scullions—a vast variety of officials of every grade and class, who must be provided for. How is this done? Simply enough, when the secret is once known—four yards of green baize, with two gentlemen armed with wooden rakes, and a box full of five-franc pieces. Nothing more is wanting.<sup>18</sup>

As both Hoffmann's tales and Lever's travel narratives attest, the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of significant economic syncretism in German-speaking central Europe. Among the ways in which the rulers of small principalities weathered social change (the Grand Duchy of Baden survived until 1918) was by the lucrative sale of gambling concessions to immigrant capital—

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<sup>18</sup> Lever, *Arthur O' Leary*, 3, pp. 72-73.

men like Jacques Bénazet, who moved his casino to Baden-Baden after the July Monarchy forced the closure of the Palais Royal gambling house in Paris. Lever's account of Baden-Baden defamiliarizes casino gaming ('four yards of green baize, with two gentlemen armed with wooden rakes, and a box full of five-franc pieces') to conjure a feudal culture attuning itself to the modern world—with the help of a technological apparatus whose profit calculus seems more than a little magical. In the absence of concerted mechanisms to squeeze surplus value, one 'secret' of returns out of all proportion to investment appears to be possession of a transcendently charismatic commodity—and the supernatural pull of the green baize is a topos I discuss in the next chapter.

We may be inclined to take with a pinch of salt Arthur O' Leary's amusing account of fiscally inspired nobles cracking capitalism. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848), published as a book at a moment of crisis (Friedrich Hecker's uprising in Baden was among the major events of Europe's revolutionary year) and in which the (fictional) German ducal town and gambling resort of Pumpernickel is described 'a moderate despotism, tempered by a Chamber that might or might not be elected', paraphrases more soberly the asymmetries characteristic of the rise of a liberal social and economic order in nineteenth-century Europe.<sup>19</sup> But by employing the Continental spa as a prism in which to capture the transition from a seigneurial, more monolithic culture of accumulation to a rational-bureaucratic, more heterogenous one, Lever strikes up an intriguing line of intertextual dialogue—and one I will return to, by way of *Daniel Deronda*, in Chapter 6.

### From Deceivers and Dupes to Generalized Hypocrisy

As I have suggested, nineteenth-century texts link watering places and duplicity not only through direct assertion but also at the level of plot design, with lies and *legerdemain* abounding in works of fiction set at Continental resorts. As the second half of my thesis will show, such storylines frequently link the charge of deceit to the cosmopolitanism, transient sociability and demographic variety they

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<sup>19</sup> Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1848), p. 570.

associate with resort culture, with this connection apparent as much in those texts that divide spa social life into liars and the lied-to as in those which assume that the whole set-up smacks of charade. Disraeli's Vivian Grey is not long at Ems before he unmasks a 'vile conspiracy' involving marked cards. In Frances Trollope's *The Robertses on Their Travels* (1846), a family of social climbers plots the kidnap of an heiress at Baden-Baden. In Tolstoi's *Family Happiness*, a naïve young bride is seduced at the baths by an unscrupulous Italian marquis. Dostoevskii's Roulettenburg hosts the machinations of the false *comtesse* Mlle. Blanche, a gambler and loan shark as well as an impostor. In an outlying dupes-and-deceivers plot, George Meredith's novel *The Amazing Marriage* (1895), innocent Carinthia Kirby is beguiled into unhappy wedlock by a feckless lord she meets at Baden-Baden. In novels in which watering places figure only briefly, the setting serves as shorthand for falsity's delight: while Thackeray's arch-schemer Becky Sharp flourishes under an assumed name at Pumpernickel—and ends the novel haunting Bath and Cheltenham.

Having described them in some detail, I now want to dwell a little on the nature and possible significance of the two, related plot patterns that seem to me a defining feature of the nineteenth-century's Continental watering-place text. As I have noted, writing about Continental spas from the 1860s and afterward seems diminishingly inclined to represent resort culture as the scene of a battle between the virtue of truth and the vice of falsehood (as in the plot synopses just listed) and increasingly interested in the waters as a venue staging generalized hypocrisy. (To frame things more mildly, there is a new impetus to paint resort social life—and, by implication, the wider social arrangement of which it formed a part—as a game of which the rules are there to be learnt.) In narrative practice, of course, there is a significant amount of overlap between the two patterns—I have already noted a heightened tendency to picture the 'honest portion' of spa patrons as something of a pitiable minority—and there is no evidence of a conclusive supersession of the older dispensation by the newer. But the two metanarratives are nonetheless distinct enough to warrant looking at side by side.

The shift from one to the other might index a change in the handling and conception of *pretence*—or at least so a closer examination of Lady Alexandrina’s self-imposed spa exile, Lydgate’s hypocritical career change, and the *Alarm Clock* cartoon about the Vichy matchmaker suggests. These three, quite different narratives of motivation have some notable things in common. They all treat disbelievingly either the idea that people go to watering places because they are physically unwell and need treatment or the (linked) notion that spa doctors might be the conscientious purveyors of a superior kind of medical cure. All three imply that Continental resorts predominantly serve what might loosely be called ‘social’ ends: money and professional satisfaction in the case of the matchmaker, money and status in Lydgate’s case, and, for Lady Alexandrina, the need to keep up appearances (and, Trollope also suggests, live in more luxury than her new husband can afford to provide her with in London). All describe a dissembling—or at least a dispensing with literalism—that, though possibly lamentable, is essentially victimless: the matchmaker’s clients presumably appreciate the spa’s erotically charged atmosphere (in Aleksandr Vel’tman’s 1835 story ‘Erotida’, set during the Napoleonic hiatus of 1814, furloughed Russian soldiers flock to the resort seeking ‘water and love at 165 degrees’; ‘voda i liubov’ vo 165°’);<sup>20</sup> Lydgate makes a dubious fortune, but only at the expense of the idle rich; and Alexandrina and Adolphus Crosbie get to stay married without having to see one another—a state of affairs which suits them both. (How different, Alexandrina’s enabling illness, from the kind of pretence we find in the earliest Continental spa narrative I have come across in writing this thesis. In Jane and Elizabeth Purbeck’s 1802 novel *Neville Castle, or The Generous Cambrians* an Italian marquis, about to be falsely accused of treason, escapes his persecutors by having his ‘money placed in French funds’ and then ‘pretend[ing] to be attacked by an indisposition for which his physician recommended the German Spa’.<sup>21</sup>)

There is, then, the sense of a passage from antagonism to negotiation—from a Manichaeian air to one of shady compromise. We can further illustrate this

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<sup>20</sup> Aleksandr Vel’tman, ‘Erotida’, in *Povesti i rasskazy* (Moscow: Sovetskaiia Rossiia, 1979), p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Jane Purbeck and Elizabeth Purbeck, *Neville Castle, or The Generous Cambrians*, 4 vols (London: Dutton & J. Cawthorn, 1802), 1, p. 147.

idea by juxtaposing Grech's 1835 account of Baden-Baden with a later Russian narrative of German spa culture. Grech (211) counsels honest visitors against the danger of encountering 'ambiguous characters' ('dvusmyslennye liudi') at the baths. By contrast, in a determinedly scurrilous travelogue called *Over The Border* (1880)—based on the author's visits to Europe in the 1870s in pursuit of treatment for persistent health problems—the Russian satirist and radical Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826-1889) represents watering places as venues staging general connivance in a pantomime of therapy:

The official attraction of these resorts lies in the curative strength of their mineral springs and the restorative properties of the surrounding mountain air. The unofficial attraction is the endless revelry implied by a mass influx of idle and highly solvent people.

[Официальная привлекательность курортов заключается в целебной силе их водяных источников и в обновляющих свойствах воздуха окружающих гор; неофициальная -- в том непрерывающемся празднике, который неразлучен с наплывом масс досужих и обладающих хорошими денежными средствами людей.]<sup>22</sup>

Like most of the texts discussed in this chapter, Saltykov-Shchedrin's divulgent spa narrative is grounded in binary oppositions (official/unofficial, repose/revelry). But the cornerstone of his rhetorics of duality is not so much the difference between those who pretend and those who tell the truth as the gap between what people (seemingly, all people) pretend to be—the roles and identities they try on and adopt, apparently out of rational self-interest—and what they essentially are and desire. An unsigned piece in an 1879 issue of the London *Saturday Review* takes an even more explicitly ludic line, making fun of those members of London society who, after too many 'heavy dinners', go to 'play at sipping salts and water'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, 'Za rubezhom' in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 20 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1972), 14, pp. 7-246 (p. 59). Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>23</sup> Unsigned, 'Homburg and Kissingen', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 6 September 1879, pp. 293-294 (p. 294).



This rhetorical line, the gist of which (to adapt a Russian joke from the late Soviet period) is that spa patrons pretend to ail and their doctors pretend to cure them, surfaces transnationally from the 1860s. But it runs most consistently through English High Victorian print culture—before being picked up, like so much from that era of travel, by Violet Hunt in her travelogue *The Desirable Alien at Home in Germany* (1913; see also my Introduction and Chapter 6). Hunt's characterisation of 'Dr. Bittelmann, of [Bad] Nauheim', 'charming, and a thorough man of the world [who] does not in the least hope or expect you to carry [his prescriptions] out' signals the endurance of the Victorian image of the spa as the scene of a smilingly unspoken—although in fact it was spoken almost everywhere—duality.<sup>24</sup>

#### 'We brought a lot of books': The Dismal Challenge

A robust trend in writing on watering places, then, makes *play*—in the sense of pretence—the unholy guarantor of *play* in the sense of 'revelry' (not to mention 'play' in the sense of gambling). Yet by no means does every account of Continental resort culture insist on the spa's meretriciousness. Indeed, a strong counter narrative, arising to a large extent from correspondence and other narratives not originally written for publication, suggests that if there was a glaring discrepancy between truth and report when it came to watering places, then it was the metanarrative of duality itself that stood at odds with a somewhat dismal—and determinedly medical and literal—actuality.

Letters and cure diaries from both ends of the long nineteenth century foreground debility, forbearance and grueling routine in their exegetics of the spa. As early as 1785 the playwright Denis Fonvizin, one of the first Russian travelers to leave an account of a European watering place, wrote to his sister of the 'intolerable boredom' he and his wife were experiencing during a cure at the Austrian resort of Baden bei Wien:

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<sup>24</sup> Hunt, *The Desirable Alien*, p. 93.

There are a large number of people here but all of them are ill. Some have gouty bellies, others are struck down with palsy, or stomach cramps, or are tormented by rheumatism [...] We brought a lot of books with us from Vienna and they help to keep the boredom at bay [...].

[Людей здесь много, но все больные. У иного подагра в брюхе, иного паралич разбил, у иной судорога в желудке, иная кричит он ревматизма [...] Из Вены взяли мы сюда много книг, которые скуку нашу разгоняют.]<sup>25</sup>

Also testifying to a cure involving much *patientia* and very little *voluptas*, Washington Irving wrote from Wiesbaden in 1822 of ‘a state of suffering that I cannot express’ and remained ‘crippled and confined to the house’ even as his condition improved. Alexis and Marie de Tocqueville, who visited the Swiss resort of Baden in 1836 for the latter’s menstrual pains, were, according to Tocqueville’s biographer Hugh Brogan, ‘extremely bored’.<sup>26</sup> In the summer of 1892 Oscar Wilde wrote a postcard from Bad Homburg to the poet Pierre Louÿs that paints its author as a libertine on rations, not in clover: ‘Je m’ennuie ici énormément, et les cinq médecins m’ont défendu de fumer des cigarettes! Je me porte très bien et je suis horriblement triste.’<sup>27</sup>

Further *prima facie* evidence suggests that spa resorts furnished less seduction and double dealing than was frequently claimed. Wiesbaden, where the naïve Sanin is seduced—and his engagement to his beloved scuppered—by the ‘man-eating’ Mme. Polozova in Turgenev’s novella *Spring Torrents* (*Veshnie vody*, 1872), was in the same period home to a ‘heavy concentration of retired people’—hardly the standard recipe for a torrid time.<sup>28</sup> The English composer Arthur Sullivan, at the Lorraine spa of Contrexéville for his kidney stones in 1891,

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<sup>25</sup> Denis Fonvizin, *Sochineniia, pis'ma i izbrannye perevody*, ed. by P.A. Efremov (St. Petersburg: Ivan Glazunov, 1866), p. 501.

<sup>26</sup> To pass the time de Tocqueville undertook ‘a brief study of the Swiss political system’. Hugh Brogan, *Alexis de Tocqueville* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 321-322.

<sup>27</sup> *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), p. 530.

<sup>28</sup> [‘Man-eating’ is Milton Ehre’s epithet for Mme Polozova. See ‘Ivan Turgenev’ in *Handbook of Russian Literature*, ed. by Victor Terras (London: Yale University Press, 1985), p.489. David Blackbourn, *History of Germany*, p. 202.

made fun of the idea that watering-place social life was eye opening, writing of a 'constant delirious whirl of dullness.'<sup>29</sup> Such reports chime not with the mainstream of mid-nineteenth century fictional and journalistic writing on Continental resorts, but rather with John Dowell's sense, in Ford's *The Good Soldier*, of being 'too polished up' at Bad Nauheim.

The image of spa culture as conditioned by a physically and psychically oppressive utilitarian calculus is echoed in recent historical scholarship. In 1840, Karl Theodor Menke, 'the leading physician of [Bad] Pyrmont', a popular watering place in Lower Saxony, described the daily routine of the cure seekers under his care:

1. Waking up no later than six o'clock.
2. Between 6 and 7:30, washing, rinsing one's mouth, dressing, walking to the spring, and drinking six to eight glasses of water.
3. At 8, a light breakfast.
4. Between 9 and 12, a bath or socializing, walking, light reading or drawing.
5. Between 1 and 2 in the afternoon, lunch in company.
6. From 2 to 5, walking, riding, and relaxing excursions.
7. After 5, an hour of drinking waters, if prescribed.
8. From 6 to 8, cultural activities, theater, concerts or assemblies (on Wednesdays).
9. At 8, a light supper either in company or alone in one's room.
10. By 10, a patient is in bed.<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Menke's schedule recalls the tedious time (described in Chapter 1) had by Lidiia Veselitskaia's Mimi (Mimochka) at the Caucasian resort of Zheleznovodsk. Indeed, Heikki Lempa, from whose study of the emotional economy of nineteenth-century Pyrmont I take the above schema, has suggested that, rather than simply being designed to facilitate the most efficacious possible cure, such routines reflected a broader interest in regulating spa patrons' behaviour. The therapeutic and leisure activities laid on at Pyrmont in the 1840s, Lempa contends, were carefully calibrated as part of an agenda of 'social disciplining' (43).

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<sup>29</sup> Bradley, *Water Music*, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Heikki Lempa, 'The Spa: Emotional Economy and Social Classes in Nineteenth-Century Pyrmont', *Central European History*, 35, (2002), 37-73, (p. 42). Further references in parenthesis.

From Karamzin in 1785 to Wilde in the 1890s via Dr. Menke in the 1840s, the counter-narrative just described offers a picture of hydrotherapeutic medicine as a scientific (or at least consideredly scientific) discipline practised with a high degree of seriousness and received by patients in a similar spirit. Although it is tempting to read charlatanry into the byzantine and jargon-ridden professional discourse of the water cure—one American doctor’s manual details twenty-six potential modes of administration, from the ‘drop bath’ to the ‘wet girdle’ via ‘wet-sheet packing’—there is scant good evidence to support the idea that such language was a mask for calculated fakery; or to suggest that spa doctors and cure-seekers did not, for the most part, mean what they said and did.<sup>31</sup> As Lempa implies, the most compelling reason to blow the whistle on nineteenth-century hydrotherapy might well not be in order to expose it as a pretext for ‘revelry’ or as a way for quacks to squeeze money out of the gullible and decadent (the latter practice would anyway hardly have stood out in an age of unregulated patent medicines), but in order to cite it as the agent, wilful or not, of a Foucauldian regime of biopower. Charles Lever’s Arthur O’ Leary makes a suggestive intervention in this respect during an extended disquisition on spa doctors quite unlike Hunt’s Dr. Bittelmann. Ironizing an excessive, injunctive respect for binaries (knowledge/ignorance, cure/kill) and its exploitation by self-appointed authority figures, O’ Leary points up an important friction in modernity between categorical reasoning and the less systematic kind of thinking that might counter such disempowerment:

Plain, common-sense people, who know nothing of physic or its mysteries, might fall into the fatal error of supposing that the wells so universally employed by the people of the country for all purposes of washing, bathing, and cooking, however impregnated by mineral properties, were still by no means so capable, in proportions of great power and efficacy, of effecting either very decided results, curative or noxious. The doctor must set his heel on this heresy at once; he must be able to show how a sip too much or a half-glass too many can produce the gravest consequences; and no summer must pass over without at least one death being attributed

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<sup>31</sup> R.M. Trall, *Water Cure for the Million: The Processes of Water-Cure Explained* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1883), pp. 13-19.

to the inconsiderate rashness of some insensate drinker. Woe unto him then who drinks without a doctor!<sup>32</sup>

### ‘The Resolution of a Dissonance’: Duality and Topicality

The two basic narrative typologies discussed so far in this chapter (here I lump the deceivers-and-dupes and lie-of-mutual convenience models together, setting them against the idea of the spa as highly medicalized disciplinary locus) lend themselves to distinct (though not necessarily conflicting) readings of industrial modernity as a cultural condition. Both the idea that ‘official’ watering-place discourse could not be taken at face value and the more extensive notion that spa patrons and doctors alike understood and happily acquiesced in the fact speak to a Baudrillardian sense of the uncoupling of signs from signifiers in an era of proliferating images and dematerializing social relations—with the latter a more phlegmatic (or more cynical) and the former a more morally engaged (or more puritanical) reactive stance. On the other hand, and as I have already suggested, the idea that the spa might be a grim embodiment of an advancing medico-bureaucratic order evokes Michel Foucault’s overwhelmingly influential work on institutional regimes of power.

But, the ‘dismal’ challenge notwithstanding, the metanarrative of revelrous and mercenary duality (or ‘simulacrality’) undoubtedly predominates in texts written for publication—and overwhelmingly in fiction. (Only Tolstoi, in narrating Kiti Shcherbatskii’s recuperation at Bad Soden after her romantic rejection by Vronskii in *Anna Karenina* (1877), ‘does not spare mercilessly concrete physiological details, such as coughing, debilitation, morbid emancipation and perspiration’—here I cite Valeria Sobol’s excellent study of lovesickness in Russian literature.)<sup>33</sup> The notion of a radical disjunction between reality and representation thus seems to function, as it circulated between

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<sup>32</sup> *Arthur O’Leary*, 3, p. 130.

<sup>33</sup> See Sobol, *Febris Erotica: Lovesickness in the Russian Literary Imagination* (London: University of Washington Press, 2009), p. 180.

narratives and literary cultures, as a kind of consensual nucleus, lending form and structural stability to the nineteenth-century's watering-place text and the topic of spa culture.

But why should such a narrative line have been so appealing, or intuitive, in the first place? Petra Rau, in one of the few critical monographs to touch upon the theme of the Continental spa in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing, refers us, reasonably enough, to the watering place itself. Distinguishing fashionable health resorts from other nodes in the Foucauldian disciplinary complex on the basis that, unlike prisons and asylums, their social nature and function cannot easily be tied down, Rau sets up places like Baden-Baden as fundamentally ambivalent loci, exceptionally suited to the tricky epistemological purposes of modernists like Ford Madox Ford:

The spa is a profoundly equivocal locus in the European cultural and literary landscape: it appears to be socially exclusive but is open to anyone who has sufficient money; it seems to encourage social intercourse between different strata of society but actually enforces social discrimination; it purports to alleviate specific illnesses under strict institutional surveillance while its liberal climate encourages social and sexual transgression [...] The spa is *the* simulacrum for a story about simulacra. In its opacity, its greyness—it is positively disorienting.<sup>34</sup>

For Rau, who as well as discussing Ford's *The Good Soldier* alights briefly upon Thackeray, George Eliot and Turgenev's watering-place fiction in the course of a wider tour of Anglo-German literary relations in modernity, nineteenth-century narratives play out duality at the waters all above because spas were dualistic social spaces. But this account suffers a little from a tendency to elide the necessary gap between its own rendition of watering-place culture and that offered by its literary sources.

Parts of Rau's contextual account of fashionable German bathing resorts ('[an] upmarket clientele mingled with a train of financially strained guests who relied upon the greater affordability of a respectable lifestyle in provincial towns.

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<sup>34</sup>Petra Rau, *English Modernism, National Identity and the Germans, 1890-1950* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 93. Further references in parenthesis.

And finally there were the roguish *déclassé* elements that hoped, by more or less fraudulent means, to eke out a living [...]’ (94) relies on tropes nurtured in some of the nineteenth-century’s more scintillating resort-set *fiction*, notably Dostoevskii’s *The Gambler*—see the next chapter—and Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne* (1861). Ian Bradley’s *Water Music* (2010), a study of the musical culture of nineteenth-century spa resorts, also buys heavily into social mythologies cultivated in the print culture of the period of study, at times putting too-tendentious a gloss on empirical research (‘most of those staying in spas by the mid-nineteenth century were in search of amusement, diversion, entertainment and distraction’).<sup>35</sup>

Rau’s ‘simulacral’ reading of the spa does not invoke Baudrillard, the twentieth century’s major theorist—in *L’Échange symbolique et la mort* (*Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 1976) and *Simulacres et simulation* (*Simulacra and Simulation*, 1981)—of the concept. Indeed, Rau appears, in the extract cited above and elsewhere, to equate simulacrality with meretriciousness—and at the same time to associate the former with ‘greyness’ and ‘opacity’. Yet the point of Baudrillard’s diagnosis of the modern and post-modern conditions as increasingly saturated with simulacra is not that second-order images of reality are bound to produce false or misleading impressions, but rather that their ‘precession’—their import in culture over and above that of their apparent referents—threatens a dematerialization of the basis on which such judgments can be made. ‘The simulacrum is never what hides the truth—it is truth that hides the fact that there is none’, read Baudrillard’s epigraph, somewhat disingenuously adapted from Ecclesiastes, to *Simulacra and Simulation*.<sup>36</sup>

Such a sense of a world composed of depthless textual surfaces can engender the sense of ‘greyness’ and ‘opacity’ that Rau registers. But her analysis, predicated on a binary disjunction between surface and interior essence, does not speak to such a feeling. By toeing the nineteenth century’s watering-place text’s

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<sup>35</sup> Bradley, *Water Music*, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> See *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006) p. 1.

binary epistemological mark, Rau, apparently inadvertently, reinforces the validity of Baudrillard's point about the insidious power of signs.

Significant hermeneutic comfort can be derived from installing myth and truth (or reality and representation) as binary propositions and then positioning oneself on the right side of the argument. (We might even suggest that such positioning is intrinsic to topic formation.) The interest of texts in laying bare latent truths about resort culture certainly accords with Victorian fiction's more general tendency, described by Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth in an important study, to deploy scenarios of disclosure or revelation as a way of buttressing, rhetorically, hegemonic social and cultural narratives: 'ignorance and unbelief [are] illuminated by unknown facts discovered and secrets revealed [...Like] the resolution of a dissonance in harmonic music [such disclosure] reaffirms the existence of a single system of explanation and interpretation.'<sup>37</sup>

Nor, for that matter, need we necessarily historicize the appeal of disclosure. Heidegger's phenomenological ontology predicates truth (*alētheia*) upon 'unconcealment' or 'clearing' (a complex action I will not attempt to summarize here).<sup>38</sup> We might argue, meanwhile, that literary discourse has a vested interest in latency, evidenced in the prominence it accords to paralinguistic features of communication like rhythm; suggestively, a number of classic structural concepts in the study of narrative, including Freytag's concept of *dénouement* and Aristotle's *anagnorisis*, or recognition, hinge on the emergence of things previously suppressed or repressed.

It could—I am suggesting—be a mistake, in thinking about narratives of spaciality and hypocrisy, to attempt to locate the reason for such plot patterns in the locus itself—to insist, in Gilles Deleuze's terms, upon 'refer[ring] a sign to the object that emits it'.<sup>39</sup> We might, instead—or simultaneously—invoke the immediacy, intelligibility (and consequently the rhetorical appeal) of the imputation of conspiracy.

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<sup>37</sup> See *The English Novel in History, 1840-1895* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Mark A. Wrathall, *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), esp. pp. 11-72.

<sup>39</sup> See *Proust and Signs*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Athlone: 2000), p. 29.



At the same time it would be perverse to ignore those characteristics (or, at least, perceived characteristics) of resort culture that might reasonably be expected to have provoked nineteenth-century readers and writers. Entrenched (transnational) prejudice against gambling—see the next chapter—and communal bathing undoubtedly informed both popular and elite judgment when it came to Continental spas; while in Saltykov-Shchedrin's invocation of 'influx' " (*naphlyv*; the Russian noun is not far off connoting an *inundation*) and the rife of impostors in spa narratives—see below—we can sense the tug of a more-or-less submerged and largely pejorative discourse on transient sociability (an 'ancient European tradition', writes Anthony Pagden, 'locates the source of all civility [...] in settled communities, and [...] looks on all modes of nomadism as irredeemably savage').<sup>40</sup>

Narrative chariness of watering places can equally be approached from a Marxist perspective, given modern resort culture's exemplification of what the economic historian Karl Polanyi terms 'fictitious commodification': that is, the commodification, characteristic of modern capitalist societies, of resources (including labour and, as in the case of the spa, the natural world) morally unsuitable for commodification because the laws of supply and demand (and thus the logic of capital accumulation) cannot be applied to them in good conscience. Both Maupassant's *Mont Oriol* (see Introduction) and Walter Scott's *St. Ronan's Well* (see Chapter 1)—the former more openly—engage with the problem of the marketization of exhaustible and uncountable articles; moreover, the second half of the nineteenth century, is, for all its metropolitan orientation (and as I have already suggested), consistently the venue of a Romantically inscribed antipastoralism (I am thinking of Wordsworth's and later Ruskin's objections to the extension of rail travel). Mark's Twain division, in *A Tramp Abroad*, of the 'beauties' of Baden-Baden into parts labelled 'natural' and 'artificial' refers to the bandstands, pleasure grounds and 'sparkling fountain jets' that decorated the resort. But more momentous anthropogenic environmental changes undergirded commercial-scale hydrotherapy (such operations involved radioactive water

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<sup>40</sup>*European Encounters with the New World* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 157.

being blasted off course and routed into wooden pipes—‘at fifteen cubic feet per minute’ over seven miles, according to Charles Francis Coghlan in an 1858 guide book called *The Beauties of Baden-Baden*—before having its temperature adjusted to suit bathers’ skins, its ‘impurities’ siphoned off and a price tag attached).<sup>41</sup>

A related way of approaching nineteenth-century skepticism about watering places might center on the question of work—and specifically its mandated absence at health resorts. Jonathan Crary has described how Marx, in the *Grundrisse* (written in 1857-8), evokes the capitalist imperative of ‘constant continuity’ in the production and circulation of commodities; Crary also traces the progress through industrial modernity of a current of thought culminating in the culturally diffused assumption that the non-stop productivity of labour is vital to the functioning of economies.<sup>42</sup> In reporting that ‘one grows tired of being perpetually idle’ in the “Castle of Indolence” that is Baden-Baden (so much inactivity being ‘too farcical for a rational being’), an 1840 correspondent of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* might equally, depending on one’s perspective, be evincing a reasonable discomfort at feeling the grass grow under his feet or announcing his ideological capture by the forces of instrumental and economic reason.<sup>43</sup> In any event the notion that leisure and ethical dysfunction go together in an ugly fellowship seems as close as any to a defining High Victorian idea.

Of course, the binary opposition *askēsis/hēdonē* always conceals a more convoluted arrangement. Theodor Adorno notes in ‘Culture and Administration’ that ‘[i]n bourgeois culture [...] a terribly complex relation prevails between the useful and the useless’—Adorno’s essay, circling around the question of what value and necessity can mean in an era characterized by multiplying, colliding cultural forms and the distortions wrought by their marketization, might have found a useful case study in the baroque medical and social complex represented

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<sup>41</sup> Twain, *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 196; Coghlan, *The Beauties of Baden-Baden and its Environs* (London: F. Coghlan 1858), p. 63.

<sup>42</sup> Crary, 24/7: *Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> Unsigned, ‘Baden-Baden’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, October 1848, pp. 478-480 (p. 479).

by the modern resort—and, as Dr. Menke’s therapeutic schema at Bad Pyrmont suggests, spas can almost as easily be read as symptomatic of industrial modernity’s rampant colonization of time as they can as disruptive of a valorized regime of productivity.<sup>44</sup>

Yet the latter reading is markedly more prominent. In 1866 the Baden-Baden correspondent of *Frank Leslie’s Lady’s Magazine* took that resort to task on the basis that ‘dissipation is the inevitable result of idleness’; and such notions and formulations—‘dissolution’ was another intuitive term in view of the kind of therapy spas offered—were seldom very far from hand in mid-century writing on resort culture.<sup>45</sup> In an American context several Saratoga narratives, prominently Holley’s *Samantha at Saratoga*, in which Samantha’s farmer husband Josiah goes to pieces morally during his first ever vacation, problematize the suspension of work, especially in the case of men.<sup>46</sup> Roderick Hudson learns at Baden-Baden—and perfects at Rome—the corrosive art of *dolce far niente*; while in James’s *Confidence*, the novel in which the never-glimpsed Maclanes take Baden-Baden to be ‘immoral’, Gordon Wright, scientist and paragon of American industry, attempts to reconcile himself to his own (unexpected) indulgence in an axiomatic watering-place pastime by framing the matter in the terms of his day-job. In a letter that, in an echo of *Roderick Hudson*, ‘b[ears] the date of Baden-Baden’, he writes (keen to persuade his friend Bernard Longueville to come to his side):

I have been making love [to Angela Vivian] ever since the last of

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<sup>44</sup> Adorno, ‘Culture and Administration’ in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. by J.M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 93-113 (p. 98).

<sup>45</sup> Unsigned, ‘Baden-Baden, the Saratoga of Europe.’ *Frank Leslie’s Lady’s Magazine*, 1 January 1866, pp. 29-30 (p. 29).

<sup>46</sup> Further literary examples of the perils of winding-down in an age of work: in William Dean Howells’ novel *Indian Summer* (1885), in Theodore Colville labours in his round of balls and social calls among American expatriates at Florence in part because ‘he had lived long in a [Midwestern] community where everyone was intensely occupied, and he unconsciously paid to Des Vaches [Indiana] the tribute of feeling that an objectless life was a disgrace to a man’; in Trollope’s *John Caldigate* (1879), the title character lets himself be snared by an adventuress onboard a steamer to Australia—the ship being an environment in which ‘[n]o work is required from anyone [..] the lawyer does not go to his court, nor the merchant to his desk’. See Howells, *Indian Summer* (Boston: Ticknor & Co., 1886), pp. 7-8; Trollope, *John Caldigate* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1880), p. 36.

May. It takes an immense amount of time, and everything else has got terribly behindhand. I don't mean to say that the experiment itself has gone on very fast; but I am trying to push it forward. I haven't yet had time to test its success [...]<sup>47</sup>

Whether because the therapeutic and social regimes of the spa did not seem to match the hard-laboring pulse of the period—or because (here I draw on Lempa's analysis) in making recuperation itself a rhythmized, goal-directed practice, they seemed to match it rather too well and thus rather defeat the point of a resort, watering-place culture and work stood in uneasy ideological and narrative relation.

Or perhaps—recalling Roderick Hudson's fate—the spa in print-cultural lore is so well stocked with potentially debilitating influences that, even if a wholesome species of loafing were to be had, it could not be had at the waters. So, at least, is the conclusion of the title character in Francis Marion Crawford's 1883 novel about a pedantic Heidelberg scholar caught up in transatlantic intrigue. 'If I were seeking innocent recreation from my labours, [Baden-Baden] is not exactly the spot I would choose to disport myself in', advises Doctor Claudius, executing a sharp pivot out of litotes into a novel binary arrangement: '[T]he scenery is good but the people are detestable'.<sup>48</sup>

#### 'Pleasant but wrong': The Spa as Mixed-Use Development

One way in which we might try to reconcile the two main explanations I have floated for the strong metanarrative of spa duality in post-1840 writing—the historicizing notion that it can be referred to particular characteristics of resort culture and the idea that binary accounts and the rhetorics of disclosure have an important role in the structuring of topics in discourse—is by considering the large Continental watering place as a distinct, characteristic (and, for some alienating) spatial form in a mid-nineteenth-century context. Recalling Bernard Toulrier's conception of the spa as a venue designed to satisfy in one spot multiple

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<sup>47</sup> *Confidence*, p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> Crawford, *Dr. Claudius: A True Story* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1883), p. 41.

discrete primary human agendas (‘éviter la maladie, fuir l’ennui’—but also dépenser de l’argent’, se mettre en avant et al.), it is not difficult to see how writers, always managing a degree of compulsion when ‘inserting’ themselves into a larger cultural ‘text’ represented by the existing corpus of writing on a subject to (a) give their intervention coherent narrative and rhetorical form and (b) to minimize disruption to the existing stock of truths, might be inclined, individually and en masse, to construe a manifold agenda as a dualistic or deceitful one.

According to the American Urban Land Institute at the end of the twentieth century, a ‘mixed-use development’ is a site with ‘three or more significant revenue-producing uses, with significant physical and functional integration (including uninterrupted pedestrian connections), and [which has been] developed in conformance (*sic*) with a coherent plan’.<sup>49</sup> Mixed-use development, its proponents claim, reduces urban ‘sprawl’ and, by integrating commercial, recreational and residential land use, increases the vitality and social cohesion of municipal spaces. (‘Mixed-use’ is also an effective socio-spatial form from the point of view of both commercial profit and government and municipal tax yields.) The concept, popularized by American developers in the 1970s, is associated with postmodern trends in architecture and urban planning. But it also describes strikingly well the developmental trajectory taken by Europe’s larger spas in the second half of the nineteenth century.

At resorts like Baden-Baden and Bad Homburg, entrepreneurs like the Bénazets and Blancs adopted what is today termed ‘mixed use’ as a conscious commercial strategy. The topography of the typical late-century Continental watering place testifies to the rapid renovation of rural settlements along rational-commercial lines. In a manner prefiguring late capitalist urban, suburban and ‘out of town’ development, venues furnishing such diverse (but compatible) opportunities for consumption and expenditure as gambling, boutique shopping (‘the stores furnish everything that can be bought in Paris’, confided the *New York Times* in 1857) and dining (privately or at the *table*

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<sup>49</sup> Andy Coupland, *Reclaiming the City: Mixed Use Development* (Oxford: Alden Press, 1997), p. 5.

*d'hôte*) clustered compactly—often in geometrical arrangement—around the physical and intentional focal point of a well-appointed bathing establishment.<sup>50</sup> The various nodes communicated by way of paved and shaded walks through landscaped arbours and gardens; theatres, hotels, bandstands, sporting facilities and villas for rent rounded off a significantly integrated but also highly diverse socio-spatial arrangement.<sup>51</sup>

An unsigned 1865 piece on Baden-Baden, first published in the monthly *London Society*, both helps frame the idea that we might usefully conceive of nineteenth-century water resorts as mixed-use developments *avant la lettre* and lends support to the suggestion that the coordinated variety of activities on offer at spas might have stopped spa culture being a *succès d'estime*. The extract below condenses through ellipsis a much longer narrative (without, I think, distorting its spirit)—and the italics are mine:

Going to Baden and going to the Bad are by very many persons considered synonymous. Certainly *society is mixed and experiences manifold, and the entire place is, to a considerable extent, pleasant but wrong [...]* After your arrival, if you happen to possess a well-regulated mind, or rather any mind at all, you will endeavour to arrange your impressions in an orderly manner [...] [...] assuredly to a man of lotus-eating disposition, Baden will present many attractions [...] A friend of mine, who hates humbug [said to me]: 'You have been walking in Bénazet's grounds and listening to his music, and lounging on his sofas [...] and yet you attack him [...] and since you are one of these fellows who can't go quietly about these watering-places or anywhere else but must always be using pen and ink, you will probably print your revilings'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Unsigned, 'Baden-Baden: The Town, Prevailing Fashions, Gambling &c, &c', *New York Times*, Nov 12, 1857, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Mixed-use development is often sold by developers as blending the best features of the city and the countryside. Nineteenth-century spa promoters took a similar tack. Take, for example, Eugène Guinot, on the opening page of an 1853 work called *A Summer at Baden-Baden*: 'In all the capitals and great cities of Europe the month of May inevitably an end to the [winter social] season [...] After Lent, a period of penitence and worldly enjoyment, the saloons close, balls are interrupted and concerts cease. What is to be done? The town becomes oppressive, its walls stifle you, you feel a longing to breathe a purer, fresher air [...]'. Heikki Lempa (47) is less positive about the blend, characterising nineteenth-century Bad Pyrmont as 'a combination of cosmopolitan flair and rural parochialism.' See Guinot, *A Summer at Baden-Baden* (Paris: J. Claye & Co., 1853), pp. 1-2.

<sup>52</sup> Unsigned, 'Baden-Baden', *London Society*, reprinted in *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science and Art*, January 1865, pp. 80-88.

The above, in which '[g]oing to the Bad', 'lotus-eating' and 'mixed' and 'manifold' experience are brought into direct or implied equivalence—as, indeed, are a 'well-regulated mind' and 'any mind at all'—can be read as a (mildly disingenuous) metaprocedural record of the author's professional encounter with resort culture as a topic. Baden-Baden has been drunk in—apparently languidly, sensorially and with no sense of its sundriness being a bar to the pleasure of the flâneurish subject our correspondent identifies himself as being ('You have been walking in Bénazet's grounds and listening to his music, and lounging on his sofas'—society journalists are always, in a sense, gonzo journalists). *Contra* the telling here, it appears to be when the time comes to deliver copy rather than immediately 'after [...] arrival' that the 'arrang[ement of] impressions in an orderly manner' becomes a imperative, the narrative's implicit remit being to render, on behalf of the reader, analytic and evaluatory judgment upon the spa.

There is in other cultural *loci*—more authoritative than *London Society*—the sense of a responsibility if not to 'revile' then at least to register exasperation with conceptually unclubbable entities. A year earlier, the English critic Walter Bagehot had moved to 'remove [*Tristram Shandy*] from the list of first-rate books' on the basis of the failure of Sterne's narrative to meet his standards of structural integrity ('No analysis or account of *Tristram Shandy* could be given which would suit the present generation; being, indeed, a book without plan or order, it is in every generation unfit for analysis'). '[E]ccentricity, Bagehot suggests in the same essay, '[is] no fit subject for literary art.'<sup>53</sup> Bagehot admires much about Sterne's novel (finding it, perhaps, 'pleasant but wrong'), but feels compelled to speak correctively of it; *London Society*'s man at the waters is rather more alive to his own 'humbug' in disparaging the motley sociability of a place he has enjoyed being in.

*London Society* stops short of openly diagnosing deceit on the basis of Baden-Baden's 'mixed' and 'manifold' socio-spatial character. But 'pleasant but

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<sup>53</sup> Bagehot, 'Sterne and Thackeray' in *Literary Studies*, 3 vols (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1905), 2, pp. 282-325 (pp. 301; 294; 303). See also René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950*, 8 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4. p. 181.

wrong' does suggest itself as a paraphrase for a kind of generalized meretriciousness. The tenor of the above article, indeed, seems conditioned by the kind of binary logic that, on an aesthetic level, associates impact with vivid contrasts between surfaces, and, at the level of ethical judgment, finds glittering surfaces to be the natural concomitant of unsalubrious depths.

A perennially tempting means of ordering a variegated and apparently clash-riven fund of observation is the exposé. In a resort context (and the next chapter will pursue this idea further) such rhetorical stratagems are most avidly pursued, and writers most literally concerned with 'unmasking', in narratives of the spa casino, or *Spielbank*. The elegant croupiers at Bad Homburg, an unsigned article printed in *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1864 reports, are all 'broken-down gamblers' who delight in tricking punters. As if that were not enough, confidence tricksters, usually working in pairs, engineer elaborate scams, their success predicated on the social prejudice of onlookers:

A [...] Russian general with a huge moustache and a brochette of orders on his breast; by his side [...] accidentally, of course, a young man of one-and-twenty, beardless, and in the habit of blushing like a peony at any strong language [...] The croupier announces "36, rouge, pair et passe". At this moment the simple youth places on No. 36, a double florin, underneath which is a double Frederick d'or [...]'.<sup>54</sup>

A subtext of George Eliot's narrator's observation, in *The Mill on Floss* (1860), that '[p]lotting covetousness, and deliberate contrivance, in order to compass a selfish end, are nowhere abundant but in the world of the dramatist [...] they demand too intense a mental action for many of our fellow-parishioners to be guilty of them' is that the good dramatist too will shun such scenes.<sup>55</sup> Yet confidence men and women, at spas and elsewhere, are among the nineteenth century's stubbornest literary apocrypha. Latency and plot do diverse work in plots: reifying the shortfall in understanding and realization that inheres in any representational act, or, by setting up a mystery in order to solve it, contributing

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<sup>54</sup> Unsigned, 'A Gambling Tour', *Bentley's Miscellany*, July 1864, p. 465.

<sup>55</sup> *The Mill on the Floss*, 3 vols (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1860), 1, p. 37.



toward the fixing of identity that is an important function of narrative. If only for this reason, it is difficult to overestimate the temptation, even (especially?) for the storyteller of realist inclination, of a teleology of concealment and divulgence.

#### In Lieu of a Conclusion: Jamesian Ways with Duality

The charismatic (if restrictive) figure of duality, usually predicated upon a disjunction between surface and interior, supplies the nineteenth century's transnational watering-place text with a potent narrato-formulaic framework. The question of whether the tendency of writers to find hypocrisy at the waters is better explained by reference to the spa itself (as a novel and inscrutable cultural form) or to a Heideggerian or Ermarthian rhetorics (or ontology) of disclosure is a little moot in view of the sheer range of operation of the commonplace. But asking it nevertheless helps bring into focus the commixture of ideological and verbal and rhetorical principle that animates post-1840 writing on resort culture.

Rather than trying to foreclose upon the representational convention of spa duality, I want to end this chapter by complicating it slightly through a glance at Henry James's watering-place fiction of the 1870s. There are two novels, *Roderick Hudson* and *Confidence*, already introduced, and an earlier, slighter piece, the short story 'Eugene Pickering' (1874), in all of which a lightly-worn observance of the code cohabits with a feeling for its expediency, for its debt to rhetoric and for the possibility or aesthetic necessity of a de-binarizing middle ground.

Nowhere does James, in narrating Continental resorts, directly speak against the idea of watering-place sociability as hypocritical. Nowhere do his narrators quite indulge it, either. The closest we come to the latter is probably in *Roderick Hudson*, whose principal focalizer, Rowland Mallet, quite often goes in for the half-measure of world-weary insinuation. (James writes in the New York preface of the importance of Rowland being 'sufficiently [but] not too acute'; *RH*, xvii.) Here is the exchange that transpires between Mallet and the young expatriate painter Sam Singleton when the latter learns that Roderick, having left

the ‘mollycodd[ing]’ (40) sanctuary of Northampton, Mass. first for Paris and then for Italy, has been spending the summer at Baden-Baden:

“Ah, that’s in the Black Forest,” cried Singleton, with profound simplicity. “They say you can make capital studies of trees there.”  
“No doubt,” said Rowland, with a smile, laying an almost paternal hand on the little painter’s yellow head. “Unfortunately trees are not Roderick’s line.”

(145)

In James’s first (and most tragic) *Künstlerroman*, Singleton incarnates an (artistic and affective) literalism that is also a hearty materialism—an unmixed delight in (and affinity with) the sturdy surfaces of things, such as trees, that embody a ‘profound [in the sense of all-the-way down] simplicity’. His small skill as a painter is a match for his physical littleness—just as Roderick’s grander physique figures his much larger capacity as a sculptor; but, ‘so perfect an example of the little noiseless devoted worker’ (109), Singleton grinds out an effective mimesis grounded in the close observation at landscape, while Roderick, ‘fling[ing] Imitation overboard’ (33), chases in his art the quiddities and phosphorescences of ‘the living model’ (59).

Sam Singleton does not visit Baden-Baden, but might, if he had, have found himself rather as Gordon Wright does in *Confidence*, to be a ‘very regular’ (*RH*, 485) fish out of water. Roderick, by contrast possessed of a ‘temperament’ both ‘artistic’ (27) and ‘aristocratic’ (30), is highly susceptible to the place. Furnishing contact with both poles of experience—like almost all first-time gamblers in fiction, he starts by winning big at the casino and ends by gambling himself broke (139)—Baden-Baden accommodates the young sculptor’s (artistic, affective) appetite for ‘experiment’ (225) and ‘play with paradox’ (122). Roderick’s interest in extremes, in ‘do[ing] something violent and indecent and impossible’ (71), is a cornerstone both of his genius and of what James, in the preface calls his ‘large capacity for ruin’ (xiv). His ‘going to pieces’ (xiv), the intuitive fate of a ‘sublime’ (116) energy not carefully contained, has often been

attributed to his infatuation with Christina Light—and to the influence of Rome and Florence (‘This place [Italy] has destroyed any scrap of consistency that I ever possessed’) (457). But Italy is a moral mixed bag in *Roderick Hudson*—and it is Baden-Baden that first and most unmixedly fulfils Roderick’s mother’s fears that the ‘climate’ in Europe will be ‘very relaxing’ (58). Roderick ‘learn[s] terribly well how to do nothing’ there; and, upon departing, feels the need of ‘a month’s work to take out of my mouth the taste of so many lies’ (135-36).

Spa culture features only fleetingly in *Roderick Hudson*—and Roderick’s letters from Baden-Baden, full of ‘ambiguous [...] allusions’ (136), hint only dimly at what has befallen him—or what he has been persuaded to do—there. Rowland Mallet hopes that, ‘impulsive [and] unpractised in stoicism’, the young man has only paid ‘the usual vulgar tribute to folly’ (137). But it is not to be: Baden is stepping-stone—and we carry away the impression of a place of unblended extremities, a seat of the kind of sensations and temptations that will upset Roderick’s ‘precarious’ (285) balance. James’s young genius ends the novel toppling suicidally into a ravine on his way to another resort (Interlaken), while Singleton—Philip Horne has written of his ‘steady work’ and ‘quiet ability to develop’, marking these as Jamesian creative totems, especially for the beginning artist—survives Europe to attain to a modest success.<sup>56</sup>

*Roderick Hudson* does not, then, fight shy of suggesting a set of spatial, human and artistic typologies ranged in binary opposition: steadiness/mercuriality; talent/endeavor; narrow safety/broad peril; Northampton/Baden-Baden; the United States/Europe. The novel also accommodates, and at times seems to promote, a sense of the character of people and places as unitary and self-consistent. But James also, importantly, furnishes an ethical midpoint in the shape of one of those fallibilistic, self-consciously divided selves in whom it is always tempting to see a portrait of the author.

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<sup>56</sup> On what might be suggested by the differences between Singleton’s progress and Roderick’s, see Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision: The New York Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 104-106.

Rowland Mallet is a ‘temperate’ (24) character—‘neither an irresponsibly contemplative nature [like Roderick] nor a sturdily practical one [like Singleton]’ (16). Rowland ‘pronounce[s] badly, but underst[ands] everything’ (228)—including the fact that, for his friend’s good, ‘Baden-Baden should immediately be quitted’ (137). Yet his patronage of Roderick is inseparable from his interest in living, with classically Jamesian vicariousness, through the achievements and the trials of the ‘vigorous young man of genius without a penny’ he to a significant degree wishes he had been (16). He wonders after Roderick’s adventures at Baden-Baden and Rome whether ‘possibly his brilliant young friend were without a conscience’ (220), before excusing him on the basis that ‘[g]enius was priceless, beneficent, divine, but it was also at its hours capricious, sinister, cruel; and natures ridden by it, accordingly, were very enviable and very helpless’ (222). But Rowland is himself testament to the possible faultiness of this reading of Roderick—to the fact of the well-rounded (in art and life) character also containing multitudes.

In *Confidence*, too, James appears content to let Baden-Baden’s conceptually cloven reputation rest relatively undisturbed. A reading of the novel, in which Gordon, ‘an excellent honest fellow’, flounders in his love-making because he cannot crack the subtle social atmosphere of expatriate Homburg (his path to Angela is blocked by her mother, a redoubtable tactician in the field of courtship) might reasonably resolve itself through the opposition of surface and interior, with resort culture favouring sensibility over intellect, brittleness over resolve, aestheticism over simplicity, talent over endeavour (*Roderick Hudson*’s binary keynote), chic over beauty, etc. Yet, again like *Roderick Hudson*, *Confidence* delivers such messages mostly by innuendo (Bernard Longueville to Angela Vivian, who is reading Victor Cousin: “‘Studying philosophy at the Baden Kursaal strikes me as a real intellectual feat’”), while James’s title, connoting both secrecy and faith in things unseen, speaks the narrative’s critical preoccupation with questions of knowledge and its construal.<sup>57</sup> Finally, by setting the novel’s Baden-Baden scenes ‘in the gaming days, five-and-twenty years ago’,

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<sup>57</sup> *Confidence*, p. 61.

James advertises a self-conscious investment in watering-place myth (in a manner that reminds us of the Saratoga narratives of William Dean Howells and Jennie E. Hicks).<sup>58</sup>

*Confidence*, furthermore, goes some way to unsettling the binary oppositions it suffers to make themselves heard, not least by registering how the vagaries of textual mediation tend to push conceptions to extremes. Here I am thinking of the Maclanes's notion of Baden-Baden as 'immoral', but also of the item of written misinformation on which James's plot turns. Bernard inaccurately—though in good faith—reports to an absent Gordon that Angela, to whom the latter has been so assiduously making love, is not trustworthy, prompting the former to drop his pursuit of her. (We might also have in mind at this point Sam Singleton's credulous 'they say' and the retroactive ominousness of both Gordon and Roderick Hudson's first letters from Baden-Baden). In a delicate inversion, the unfolding of *Confidence*'s second half rests not upon the triumph of a watering-place falsehood but on the consequences of an honest misprision too literally received.

Finally, James's story 'Eugene Pickering', set at Bad Homburg, both draws on motifs of duality and lays bare their conventionality. Again, 'going to the Bad'—or going astray—at the spa is a diegetic reality—but one owing much to expectation and inscription.

Eugene arrives at Homburg a hothoused innocent—or at least identifying as such after a J.S. Mill-style cloistered upbringing: 'I am a regular garden plant. I have been watched and watered and pruned'.<sup>59</sup> Rather like the hero of Voltaire's *L'ingénu* (1767), who leaves a Huron tribe for Europe, his attitude to the spa in its urbane heyday—as in *Confidence*, James lays his scene 'several years ago, before the gaming had been suppressed'—is one of 'overt wonderment' (4). The doomed love affair Eugene contracts at the baths with the older, widowed Madame Blumenthal ('very clever, and her cleverness has spoiled her'; 51) is easily read as a naïf's deflowering. But, in a characteristic manoeuvre,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>59</sup> James, 'Eugene Pickering' in *The Madonna of the Future and Other Tales*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879), 2, pp. 1-91. (p. 18). Further references in parenthesis.

James removes (apparently) the scales from Eugene's eyes only to complicate the question of whether seeing clearly is a credible prospect.

Inverting Roderick Hudson's enigmatic insistence, on the subject of Baden-Baden morals, that '[Y]ou know all about it and what one does—what one is liable to do' (see my Introduction), 'Eugene Pickering' offers categorical tergiversation. Alluding to his own mistaken initial impression that Mme. Blumenthal—glimpsed at the gambling table—might be a prostitute, the narrator, a friend of Eugene's, remarks that 'at Homburg, as people said, "one could never be sure"' (5). The axiomatic authority of the discursive field can equally well mandate undecidability as certainty.

'Eugene Pickering' is an ambivalent—more ambivalent than *Roderick Hudson*—narrative of *Bildung*. As the story progresses, James increasingly represents coming-to-self-consciousness, implicitly paired with literariness, as a kind of despoliation, with this sense engendered not least through the character of Eugene's lover and her aestheticization of the scenario of seduction. Madame Blumenthal, not just older but a German, too—in James's fiction Continental Europeans invariably carry off doublethink better than Anglo-Saxons—is described as a 'priestess of aesthetics' (6). She has 'published a novel, with her views on matrimony, in the George Sand manner' (51). Initiating Eugene into an artful—cruel—mode of living and loving—among whose prescriptions is never to read signs literally—she ushers him first into a dream in which life imitates art and subsequently into a nightmare in which life imitates self-conscious fiction. '[T]he story's finished; we have reached the *dénouement*. We will close the book and be good friends', Madame Blumenthal declares at last, crushing her lover with the revelation that, while he has been falling for her, she had been merely 'playing a part' (81).

But Eugene's infatuation with Madame Blumenthal and resultant inconstancy to an absent fiancée (this spa plotline is itself an apparent borrowing from Turgenev's *Smoke* (*Dym*, 1867), in which Litvinov questions his engagement to Tania upon re-encountering Irina, a former lover, at Baden-Baden) can also be construed as a performance of discursively inscribed

expectation—albeit someone else’s.<sup>60</sup> James’s unnamed narrator narrativizes Eugene’s experiences both for the reader, as befits his function and *aloud to Eugene himself*, pushing his thoughts in the direction of intrigue (“Tell me, if you can, whether this clever Madame Blumenthal, whose husband is dead, has given a point to your desire for a suspension of communication [with your fiancée]”; 34). Eugene, who has since childhood suffered with the reputation of a ‘victim of [...] irony’ (11), in a sense allows himself to be led by the nose *compoundly*, by his lover and the narrator—thus acting out a drama of romantic delusion that lacks even the consolation of being of his own making.

Another prodding or light subversion, then, of the metanarrative of spa hypocrisy. Yet in ‘Eugene Pickering’, watering-place culture does seem to offer itself, especially *spatially*, to duality. Eugene and Madame Blumenthal find it easy to strike up an illicit flirtation because Bad Homburg is a socially permissive venue furnishing a wealth of informal congressional spaces (the roulette table, an opera house, outdoor nooks offering—in a quicksilver quip about latency—‘unbroken shade’; 230). It is the simultaneous transience and intimacy characteristic of Homburg social life that allows Eugene to fall in love with a stranger in ignorance of ‘the dusty limbo of her other romances’ (281).

The late James, before *The Ivory Tower*—set at Newport in the Gilded Age—has fewer watering places, which seems to signal the spa, a topic for the 1850s and 1860s and already evincing a nostalgic appeal by the 1870s and 1880s (‘five-and-twenty years ago’), becoming a curio or social irrelevance. But in *What Maisie Knew* (1898) Beale Farange announces his abandonment of his second wife in a letter from the Belgian resort of Spa (this being a more decisive variant on the theme that sees Alexandrina Crosbie find her version of the ‘west wing-east-wing’ solution to marital strife at Baden-Baden in *The Small House at Allington*). And in *The Golden Bowl* (1904), the billionaire collector Adam Verver counts ‘watering places prevailing homes of humbug’ among the ‘places [...] not strange to him’ from his pursuit, often in discreditable spots, of exquisite objects

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<sup>60</sup> On James and Turgenev, see also Chapter 3.

d'art.<sup>61</sup> But this is in a novel which, hardly seeming to contain a propositional statement and taking as its symbolic centre a precious object with a flaw at once momentous and barely there—Geoffrey Hartman calls the golden bowl of the title a 'perfect fake'—invokes questions of authenticity, 'humbug', surface and interior.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, structured by revelations refused consummation and fictions and accommodations that do the work of truth, *The Golden Bowl* completes a sense, derived from James's earlier spa texts, of the power of dualities to give form to experience—and their inability to account for it.

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'Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult. The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin'—Eliot's narrator again, this time in *Adam Bede*.<sup>63</sup> The liars and hypocrites whom the nineteenth century's spa text so willingly admits and whom James smiles at but begins to show the door, are the stuff of a representational shorthand that antagonises libidinally as it resolves cognitively. The next chapter takes as its focus the *Spielbank*, reflecting first on the prominence in spa-gambling texts not of griffins but of comparably charged allegorical personalities: demons, sorceresses and fallen and falling women.

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<sup>61</sup> *The Golden Bowl*, ed. by Ruth Bernard Yeazell (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 182.

<sup>62</sup> Hartman, *Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Inauthenticity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 29.

<sup>63</sup> *Adam Bede*, p. 176.



### **Chapter 3**

‘What the Devil?’ Allegory and Perplexity in Watering-Place Narratives

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dantean motto proposed for the casino at Baden-Baden in an 1871 issue of *Appleton's Journal*. Unsigned, 'Reminiscences of Baden-Baden', *Appleton's Journal of Literature, Science and Art*, 10 October 1874, pp. 471-2. (p. 471).

Chapter 2 suggested the figure of duality as a pillar of the nineteenth-century's watering-place text. Chapter 3 broadens my engagement with how assimilative rhetorical formulae helped shape the topic of spa culture before discussing two modernist resort narratives that register the inadequate reach of such codes.

I begin by looking at a figural device, eschatological allegory, which served, often from a semi-submerged position, to enliven hermeneutically the *chroniques scandaleuses* that emanated in a steady stream from places like Baden-Baden at mid-century. Through readings of spa-gambling passages from Tolstoi's novella *Family Happiness* (*Semeinoe schast'e*, 1859), Anthony Trollope's novel *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864-65), and the travel sketches of the New York clergyman Joel Tyler Headley, I suggest that narratives of perdition, equipped with their own culturally routinized lexicon and *prêt-à-porter* moral charge, furnished a potent organizing principle for mid-century responses to resort culture. I then contrast this way of reading the spa with the equally perditious sense of the bursting of interpretative codes conveyed in *The Gambler* (*Igrok*, 1867), for which Dostoevskii invented the fictional spa of Roulettenburg, and Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915), set largely at Bad Nauheim

Allegory, a device surprisingly often at hand in realist narrative, is an ambivalent vehicle for expression. It both points determinedly beyond its referent—Jeremy Tambling observes in a recent study that 'at its simplest, allegory is a way of saying one thing and meaning another'—and proffers a pre-fabricated framework for understanding it.<sup>2</sup> Religiously inscribed allegory both illuminates, enriching mimesis by positioning the empirical *sub specie aeternitas*, and mystifies by means of substitution, abstraction and interposition. In writing about watering places, the appeal to (Christian and classical) eschatological tropes and iconography meets a variety of representational ends. Sometimes it flags up prosaic equivalences (one particularly hot spring at Baden-Baden was nicknamed the *Hollenquelle*, or 'Hellish Spring').<sup>3</sup> But more regularly in resort narratives and especially where the *Spielbank* is concerned, allegory registers the attempt, ventured with varying degrees of solemnity and literalness

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<sup>2</sup> *Allegory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Dodd, *An Autumn near the Rhine*, p. 257.

(‘I have gone utterly to the devil!’ (245), laments James’s Roderick Hudson, earthily, near the end of a road taken from Baden-Baden; but Rowland Mallet at moments ‘believes, very poignantly’ (318) in the same being) to bring the clarifying force of classic moral narratives to bear upon the perplexities of the social and historical moment.

### The ‘*Table-Monstre*’: Gambling in Spa Narratives

‘For to-day, *le jeu est fait*’, ends the American weekly *Vanity Fair*’s August 1860 Letter From Baden-Baden.<sup>4</sup> The jargon and cliffhanger dynamics of casino gambling pervade spa narratives at the level of plot and figure, testifying to the centrality of the practice—and of roulette in particular—to the imaginative economy of the Continental watering place. As the wide currency of the peculiar formulation ‘gambling spa’ attests, the tropes and images associated with high-stakes gaming begin around mid-century to significantly overshadow, from a representational point of view, resort culture’s other salient parts.<sup>5</sup> In the same period, in a chain-like unfolding of figural mediation, eschatological allegory becomes a standard way of troping high-stakes gaming. Here I want to briefly trace the historical and narrative contours of this unfolding.

The gaming table [see Fig. 6], re-christened the ‘*table-monstre*’ by Charles Lever’s Arthur O’Leary, disconcerted and compelled nineteenth-century print culture.<sup>6</sup> Of ruthless and hypnotic logic, roulette in particular was easily made to augur the coming, fearful for most, of a social order operating according to machine-driven aleatory principles.<sup>7</sup> But, at least in the absence of aggravating factors like class or gender (see below), nineteenth-century literary treatments of gambling are usually not too po-faced. Games of chance were among the more lightheartedly abominated of the media devils of industrial modernity—perhaps

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<sup>4</sup> Unsigned, ‘Correspondence of Vanity Fair: No. 2. Hotel D’Angleterre, Baden-Baden’, *Vanity Fair*, August 1860, p. 89. This shortlived *Vanity Fair* (1859-1863) is not to be confused with the later, better-known publications bearing that name.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Unsigned, ‘Gambling spas—Homburg’, *London Society*, December 1862, p. 492.

<sup>6</sup> *Arthur O’Leary*, 3, p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> *Arthur O’Leary*, p. 280.



Figure 6: *Le Tapis Vert, The Gaming Table at Baden-Baden*, W. Ridgway (engraving, ca. 1883), LoC Prints and Photographs Division. By the date of this engraving gambling had been outlawed at Baden-Baden for over a decade.

because the gaming-room was still overwhelmingly conceptualized as a patrician male preserve.

The strong identification of spas with gambling did not lack an objective correlative. From the early 1840s until German unification in 1871, Jacques and Édouard Bénazet at Baden-Baden and Francois and Louis Blanc at Bad Homburg ran lavish gambling establishments in the French style, institutionalizing a practice long tolerated at Continental watering places. Significantly, not only the scale of the operation but also the games gamblers played at spa resorts changed over this period. Around 1850 the solitaire card game known both as *rouge-et-noir* and *trente-et-quarante* began to give way to roulette (Dostoevskii's emendation of Thackeray's Rougetnoirbourg to Roulettenburg reflects the shift). *Rouge-et-noir*, unmistakably a game of chance in the sense that winning and losing have only a limited amount to do with the rational agency of the gambler, uses six standard fifty-two card packs of playing cards; in doing so it seems to have sustained a redeeming association with card games like whist—respectable *loci* of aristocratic and upper bourgeois sociability.<sup>8</sup> Roulette, on the other hand, dispenses with cards entirely, while the skittering motion of ball over wheel betrays more vividly (though apparently not to many players) the intractability of the odds on offer.<sup>9</sup>

Did gaming truly (that is, on the ground and outside of books and magazines) overshadow therapeutic culture at watering places from mid-century? This is a difficult question to answer. Statistical records of spa visitor numbers in the early years of the casinos' operation are incomplete. Suggestively, however, the *Fremdenlisten* ('foreigner lists') kept by the municipal authorities in Baden-Baden testify that in 1872—the last year before the *Spielverbot* came into force

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<sup>8</sup> On the rules of *Rouge-et-noir*, see Edmond Hoyle, *Hoyle's Improved Edition of the Rules for Playing Fashionable Games* (New York: W.C. Borrodale, 1830), pp. 105-107.

<sup>9</sup> British periodical culture made much (with pejorative intent) of the preferential shift from games of 'skill' to games of 'chance' apparently signaled by the rise of roulette. See e.g. 'Cavendish', 'The Science of Croquet', *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*, 225, (1868), 225-239 (p. 225).

the resort had more overnight visitors than ever before; and that the number of *Kurgäste* fell by almost half in 1873.<sup>10</sup>

In any event, two allied conceptions—that gambling was a morally invidious practice, and that going to the baths meant gambling—significantly informed how the Continental spa was written about in New York, St. Petersburg and points in between. Guardians of legitimate culture fretted over the effect, particularly on youth, of exposure to the green baize, with Heidelberg University requesting as early as 1843 that their students not be allowed into the casino at Baden-Baden.<sup>11</sup> *The Times* reported, in more laid-back fashion and in the context of (premature) reports at the beginning of the 1860s that the Grand Ducal government planned to ban gambling, on the ‘dangerous seductions of Red and Black [at Baden-Baden]’; while the *New York Times* speculated of a ‘young American’ who had displayed particular ‘*sang froid*’ at the tables that ‘if he lives he promises to be a hardened sinner’.<sup>12</sup> James notes in ‘Homburg Reformed’—with ‘Reformed’ a reference to the *Spielverbot*—that giving an account of that resort without describing gambling feels like writing ‘Hamlet with Hamlet himself omitted’; while the Russian historians of Baden-Baden Evgenii Pazukhin and Elena Zhavoronkova contend that, for their compatriots, gambling has always represented that resort’s ‘displaced essence’ (‘vytesnennaia dominanta’).<sup>13</sup>

As the prominence of the casino in descriptions of spa culture increased from the 1840s to the 1860s, so did the tendency of writers to reach for hellfire in representing it. As we have begun to see, diabolic motifs are extremely common (at times they give the impression of being *de rigueur*) in published accounts of spa gambling, as they are in nineteenth-century writing on gaming more generally. Their prevalence reflects, as I have suggested, a negative coding of the practice in mainstream popular culture—and it is worth pausing to sketch the broader historical and cultural contours of this view.

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<sup>10</sup> Fremden-Frequenz in Baden-Baden im ganzen und nach Nationalitäten’. Baden-Baden City Archive (Signature A26/29-171).

<sup>11</sup> Wood, ‘Spa Culture’, p. 106.

<sup>12</sup> Unsigned, ‘Foreign Intelligence’, *The Times*, 17 January 1862, p. 10; ‘Baden-Baden: The Town, Prevailing Fashions, Gambling &c, &c’, *New York Times*, 12 November 1857, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> James, ‘Homburg Reformed’, p. 635; Pazukhin and Zhavoronkova, *Budem delat’ Baden-Baden*, p. 94.

J. Jeffrey Franklin has written with reference to works including *Middlemarch* and Anthony Trollope's *The Duke's Children* (1880) that 'the [English] realist novel, perhaps more than any preceding or subsequent broadly disseminated form, functioned as a vehicle for anti-gambling discourse'. Excavating the figurative basis for this discourse, Franklin links literary interest in (particularly high-stakes) gaming to 'the waves of financial speculation and panic that were endemic to nineteenth century Britain' and concern about the conflation of '[economic] value and [moral and social] values' as a possible consequence of the erosion of hereditary authority.<sup>14</sup> The gaming metaphor, in short, crystallizes, or lends didactic form to, concern about the potential knock-on effect on conduct and social cohesion of a strengthening of the money-power nexus in Victorian culture.

In a Russian context, Ian M. Helfant has traced the progress of the gambler as social archetype from the poetry of Gavril Derzhavin through Pushkin's story 'The Queen of Spades' ('Pikovaia dama', 1834) to the 'disruptive' passions of Dostoevskii's Aleksei Mikhailovich in *The Gambler* (see below).<sup>15</sup> In Helfant's reading, a certain regard for the code-observing and code-shattering prowess of the *beau joueur* and the card sharp (figures by rights antipodal) weaves a seductive aura around gambling in nineteenth-century Russian culture. But this does not stop the practice from emerging, consistently, as a western import that tickles the propensities of the Russian mind to disastrous effect. At the level of real literary relations gaming seldom turns out well for the gamer: both Pushkin's Hermann and, as I show below, Dostoevskii's Aleksei Mikhailovich end up losing their money and their reason.

As my epigraph to this chapter suggests, the association of gambling with (on one hand) damage to the social fabric and (on the other) psychological self-harm might be read as reflecting the powerful, transcultural influence of Dante's *Commedia*, which—circulating more widely than ever before in cheap Tauchnitz

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<sup>14</sup> Franklin, *Serious Play: The Cultural Form of the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> Helfant, *The High Stakes of Identity: Gambling in the Life and Literature of Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002).



editions—supplied many of the age’s *loci classici* on topics of eschatological interest.<sup>16</sup> An 1847 article in *Punch*, also referencing the famous inscription (described in Canto III) ‘All hope abandon, ye who enter here’, proposes that London’s gambling ‘hells’ be fitted with ‘iron doors [as in] Dante’.<sup>17</sup> Yet the *Commedia*’s aversion to gambling is in fact pragmatic and delimited in scope: scornful of the prospect of any gambler beating the bank, Dante confines to the second round of the seventh circle of hell ‘[w]hoever [...] deprives himself/Who games and dissipates his property.’<sup>18</sup> An economic injunction, then—carrying little of the Victorian (and Russian nineteenth-century) sense of gaming as an insidious affliction.

In any case, and I have suggested, writing on resort culture from the mid-nineteenth century deals less gravely with gaming than the words used by the correspondents of the *Times*, *New York Times* and *Punch* might imply. So long, at least, as the ‘sinners’ themselves were of an urbane variety, many writers cultivated an indulgent attitude to spa gambling, taking a certain amount of debonair pleasure in the immoderacy of the figures they sprinkled.

The timbre of Thackeray’s moral eschatology in *The Kickleburys on their Travels* (1851), for example, is joshing, confiding and relaxed. (The Kickleburys, an aristocratic London clan led by the querulous Lady Kicklebury of Pocklington Square, first appeared in *Punch*; Thackeray’s evident affection for them tells us something about the tender—anti-Jerroldian—turn taken by that organ’s satire in the 1850s). In his depiction of the spa, Thackeray uses harrowing figures, but (pointedly) not to harrowing effect; and in doing so makes fun of sanctimonious cliché and the routinization of tropes. Introducing the casino at Rougetnoirbourg, Michael Angelo Titmarsh—who as Richard Pearson has observed is a kind of Pendennis-in-prototype, ‘at once a vehicle for Thackeray’s views [...] and a satire on hack journalism in the new magazines’—declares: ‘Let us enter Hades, and see what is going on there. Hades is not an unpleasant place. Most of the people look

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<sup>16</sup> On the ‘Victorian cult of Dante’, see Alison Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Unsigned, ‘Wonderful Escape from the Treadmill’, *Punch*, 17 April 1847, p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> I quote Longfellow’s translation. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 3 vols (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1867), 1, p. 35.

rather cheerful. You don't see any frantic gamblers gnashing their teeth or dashing down their last stakes.'<sup>19</sup> As the above, Dantean quotation from *Punch* attests, West End gaming establishments had long been referred to as 'hells', not least by their patrons—and the association was no longer, if it ever had been, a strongly pejorative one.<sup>20</sup>

*The Kickleburys on their Travels* was a 'Christmas book', intended for broad and leisurely popular consumption. Invoking the abode of the dead in reference to roulette only to straightaway undermine the equivalence, Thackeray characteristically both furnishes and critically historicizes the cliché and pabulum that, as he has already suggested in his foreword, are key ingredients of a festive crowd-pleaser. (A Christmas book should be the literary equivalent of the 'negus which is offered at Christmas parties [...] Last year I tried a brew [*Rebecca and Rowena*, a parody of Scott's *Ivanhoe*] which was old, bitter, and strong; and scarce any one would drink it. This year we send round a milder tap [...]').<sup>21</sup> Returning to the Continental spa in a weightier work, *The Newcomes* (1855), Thackeray again—although this time apparently inadvertently—exposes how hackneyed or reflex figures can become a debased coinage, mixing his eschatological metaphor with a more anodyne vehicle. Gaming at Baden-Baden is first characterized in *The Newcomes* as 'a vulgar sport [...] not unpleasant', but, with an eye to the 'flirting' that he sees going on away from the tables, Arthur Pendennis proceeds to wonder whether it is truly 'the sinners [surely the sportsmen!?] who are most sinful'.<sup>22</sup> Sport and sin: both are practices meaningful only inasmuch as players respect the rules of the game; but their figural interchangeability suggests the unwarranted elevation of the one or a certain diminution of the semantic gravitas of the other.

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<sup>19</sup> Thackeray, *The Kickleburys on Their Travels* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1851), p. 50; Richard Pearson, *Thackeray and the Mediated Text: Writing for Periodicals in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (London: Ashgate, 2000), p. 36-37.

<sup>20</sup> Thackeray's choice of Hades rather than Hell as the grit in his allegorical prism reflects a general resurgence of interest in classical ideas about the afterlife, again fostered by the wide dissemination of Dante's syncretic eschatological visions.

<sup>21</sup> See 'An Essay on Thunder and Small Beer' in Thackeray, *The Kickleburys*, i-xv (i-ii).

<sup>22</sup> *The Newcomes: Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family*, ed. by Peter Shillingsburg (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 264-265.

Gravity and the Lady Gambler: Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* and the Travel Writing of Joel Tyler Headley

Eschatological allegory comes into its own as a means of formulary organization in narratives of female gambling. If when men lay bets at spas, the upshot can be, as above, 'not unpleasant', when women consider doing the same, even the most urbane narrators tend to put force behind their chastizing figures. Sexuality is, as in the *Times's* evocation of the 'seductions' of gambling, frequently the latent term in such equations of transgression; husband/father figures are customarily charged with saving the day, though the gender dynamics that animate such scenarios are hardly unambivalent.

Consider, first of all, Glencora Palliser and Alice Vavasor's conversation at the *rouge-et-noir* table at Baden-Baden in Anthony Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864-65). Glencora, who has already complained to her friend about male privilege with respect to the social freedom to drink beer and listen to music in the resort's outdoor spaces, speaks first:

"Look,—there's an opening there. I'll just put on one napoleon."

"You shall not. If you do, I'll leave you at once. Look at the women who are playing. Is there one whom it would not disgrace you to touch? Look what they are. Look at their cheeks and their eyes and their hands. Those men who rake about the money are bad enough but the women look like fiends."<sup>23</sup>

Gambling is a classic locus for the sexual double standard. 'One great evil of Baden-Baden is that it is there considered *en règle* for ladies to gamble, and many a fair dame owes her ruin to the treacherous cards', lamented *Frank Leslie's Lady's Magazine* in 1866.<sup>24</sup> *Can You Forgive Her?* is a novel about the rectification of wayward female ethical conduct—Alice chooses the wrong fiancé (her feckless cousin George), but is eventually shown the way back to the right

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<sup>23</sup> Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864-65), ed. by Andrew Swarbrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 290. Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>24</sup> Unsigned, 'Baden-Baden, the Saratoga of Europe', *Frank Leslie's Lady's Magazine*, 1 January 1866, pp. 29-30 (p. 29).

one (the reliable John Grey), although not without a certain wistful regret on the narrator's part about the social logics that make the latter the better option. Here Trollope deals with the wavering of a secondary female protagonist, making something close to a primal scene of Glencora's choices in the sphere of leisured sociability.

Before coming to Baden-Baden, Glencora has already upset Plantagenet Palliser, her upright new husband (and a candidate to become Chancellor of the Exchequer), by waltzing with Burgo Fitzgerald, a persistent paramour, at Lady Monk's ball. At the baths she finds new fuel for daydreams of transgression and latency. 'There are husbands gambling and their wives don't know it', she muses to Alice, before wondering 'whether Plantagenet has ever had a fling' (290).

'Having a fling': Angel Clare uses the same expression to justify his dance with Tess Durbeyfield at the beginning of Thomas Hardy's novel, the image being both vertiginous and erotically suggestive. Trollope's use of it underscores the figural generativeness of uncontrolled motion, especially where narratives of female misconduct are concerned: cf. the *falling-in-love/fallen* woman, the abyss or slippery slope of wilfulness or self-possession.<sup>25</sup> Alice's reproach to Glencora ("Look at the women who are playing [...] Look what they *are* [my italics]") brings home the moment of the moment; for the unitary moral subject, every action touches being and a fling is never just a fling.

Trollope spectacularizes the gambling table rather as Virgil spectacularizes Upper Hell in the *Commedia*: the ruined physiognomy of the damned ('their cheeks and their eyes and their hands') serves as a salutary warning of the special hazard for a *woman* ('[the] men [...] are bad enough but...') of taking her social station—a gendered proposition—and the conduct it implies, lightly.<sup>26</sup> By sending

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<sup>25</sup> "I am inclined to go and have a fling with them. Why not all of us—just for a minute or two—it will not detain us long?" Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 3 vols (London: Osgood, MacIlvaine and Company, 1891), 1, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Gilbert and Sullivan register a link between the aleatory motion of the roulette ball and female sexuality in their late Savoy opera *The Grand Duke* (1896), set in a Lever-like German Grand Duchy: 'A cosmic game is this Roulette!/The little ball's a true coquette/A maiden coy whom 'numbers' woo/Whom six-and-thirty suitors sue.' In a Leverian touch, the visiting Prince of Monte Carlo, who sings the roulette song, boasts of how the sale of gambling concessions has solved his financial woes: 'Take my advice—when deep in debt,/ Set up a bank and play roulette!' See *The Complete Annotated*

his wife to flirt with financial risk at the tables of Baden-Baden, the narrative sets up a wry contrast with Plantagenet's very particular career prospects (Glencora's equally risky dalliance with Burgo ultimately costs Mr. Palliser the chancellorship). But the cardinal discourse under commentary here seems to be that concerned with the expectation of female social (and by figural extension sexual) *continence*.

The hybrid cultural discourse on gender and class exemplified by Glencora and Alice's gaming-table dialogue will be taken up again in Chapter 6. Let it suffice here to comment on two aspects of Glencora's temptation, neither of them brought out in E. Taylor's illustrative sketch from the first edition [see Fig. 7]. When Glencora finally submits, despite Alice's pleading, to her compulsion and lays a bet, she retreats 'with flushed face' (291)—both an index of erotic excitement and vascular admonition against transfiguration into a 'fiend'. Colour in the cheeks is a floating signifier in nineteenth-century texts, with (often) one rule for the rich and another for the poor. (As Margaret Oliphant's narrator puts it in *Agnes* (1865), a novel which—see my epigraph to Chapter 5—takes in Baden-Baden: 'Had [blacksmith's wife Mrs. Stanfield] been of higher rank [...] her complexion would have been the theme of unlimited admiration; but in this latitude the brilliant roses of her cheeks were known, and not inappropriately, as a high colour'.<sup>27</sup>) In Trollope's novel the 'lowering' connotations of a flush (itself a ludic term) are, we might surmise, at once diabolic and socio-economic: the spectre of *moral* parity with the creatures thronging around her is Glencora's manifest deterrence from play; but the implicit consequence of self-abandon for the Victorian female subject is *déclassement*.

Secondly, it is worth marking the row of fail-safe mechanisms that help reunite Glencora with her better judgment. Hereditary reserve (an internalized form of oppression), timely peer censure ('I'll leave you at once') and rational self-interest (she very soon begins to lose money) interpose themselves between

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*Gilbert and Sullivan*, ed. by Ian Bradley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 1081-1197 (p. 1187).

<sup>27</sup> Margaret Oliphant, *Agnes*, 3 vols (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1866), 1, p. 16



Figure 7: E. Taylor, *Lady Glencora at Baden* (via Project Gutenberg)

her and Trollope's Hogarthian 'women with vermilion cheeks' (292). But Alice holds an extra remedy in reserve: '[i]f the devil should persist, and increase that stock of gold again, she must go and seek for Mr. Palliser.' (292) The mixed ethical and rhetorical economy of the text seems to frame the sealing of Glencora's 'opening' as a both a secular imperative and—only a little more discreetly—as a moment of grace; stout (not to say God-like) male superintendence remains, for Trollope, the ultimate prophylactic against female self-ruin.

Yet Mr. Palliser's eventual entry onto the scene rather complicates our sense of the gendered ethical dynamics at play in *Can You Forgive Her?* His (conventional) anger at 'find[ing] his wife playing at a common gambling table, surrounded by all that is wretched and vile' meets with a resistance on Glencora's part that, for the first time in the novel, is neither conventional nor petulant: "I certainly don't like being ashamed [...] and don't feel any necessity on this occasion" (III; 293-294). If her earlier 'fling' with Burgo represented, in the economy of the narrative, a callow reaction to conjugal smothering, the dignity with which Glencora greets this new (and, for Trollope, less warranted) reproach to her sense of possibility seems to mark the beginnings of a better-modulated female self-possession within wedlock. Near the end of the novel, Plantagenet and Glencora return to Baden-Baden and the *Spielbank* together—to gaze upon Burgo Fitzgerald losing his last napoleon at *rouge-et-noir*.

The Baden-Baden passages of *Can You Forgive Her?*, then, raise questions about female agency and its suppression or toleration by male authority figures. More specifically, they touch upon women's autonomy within the heteronomous institution of marriage. Glencora's impulse to go 'headlong to the devil' (III; 210) is inseparable from her subjunctive fascinations: the 'what-ifs' furnished for the past by Plantagenet's bachelordom and for the immediate future by the shuffling and dealing of the packs. The bonnets of the gambling women, 'half off their heads', fortify the image of open possibility. Trollope, in short, stokes up an erotics of suspension and counterfactuality before defusing it in respectably conventional fashion (the narrative recourse to eschatological figuration and implicit invocation of the marriage covenant is straitlaced). Acute

and anti-didactic, on the other hand, is the text's sense for the figural mutuality, at the level of desire, of diverse species of abandon. Financial, sexual, moral and ontological speculations congeal around the charismatic central metaphor of the roulette wheel. In a mid-Victorian English context, the green baize thus also offers itself as a venue for unabashed—because euphemistic, or sibylline—truth telling. A final remark of Glencora's ('[i]f [Plantagenet] came to me, some morning, and told me that he had lost a hundred thousand pounds, I should be so much more at my ease with him') smuggles into respectable discourse—in the shape of a final 'what-if'—the ghost of a plea for sexual and emotional honesty between husbands and wives (III; 210-211).

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Like Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?*, the American clergyman and journalist Joel Tyler Headley's travel book *The Alps and the Rhine: A Series of Sketches* (1845) turns a Baden-Baden gambling scene into a disquisition on conjugal ethics shot through with eschatological traces. But Headley, though fashioning a similar erotics of authority and exposure—and though, like Glencora Palliser, his gambling lady might be perceived as play-acting transgression from a position of class safety—presents his married subjects in a direr light than Trollope. Drained of conventional theological content, Headley's treatment of the causes and outcomes of female gambling nonetheless contains something of the superheated rhetorical brio of the evangelical sermon.

Headley's narrative does not straightforwardly abhor casino gambling. For the pre- or post-libidinal subject, *trente-et-quarante* can be a bright and harmless diversion: 'English girls were teasing their "papas" for a few sovereigns to stake on the turning of a card, and old men were watching the changes of the game with all the eagerness of youth.' But Headley's cadences darken when the narratorial gaze comes to rest on an attractive young woman about to lay a bet; having hit upon a morally and erotically charged topic (as in Trollope, the one seems difficult to separate from the other), he lays off at once the attempt to observe and record—the notional imperative in a travel sketch—and takes up a



visionary ideological stance. Like many male chroniclers of female gambling, Headley grounds his posture of outrage in an adverse contrast—between the young woman’s patrician beauty and her egregious behaviour:

[H]er whole appearance indicated a person from the upper ranks of society [...] Clad in simple white, and adorned with a profusion of jewels, she took her seat by the table, while her husband stood behind her chair; and with her delicate white hand on a pile of money before her, entered at once into the excitement of the game. [...] I gazed on her with feelings with which I had never before contemplated a woman. I did not think it was possible for an elegant and well-dressed lady to fill me with feelings of such utter disgust. Her very beauty became ugliness and her auburn tresses looked more unbecoming than the elfin looks of a sorceress [...] she seemed infinitely uglier to his money a few hours before.<sup>28</sup>

‘Fiends’ and ‘elfin looks’: the scarifying figures that animate both Anthony Trollope’s gaming scene and this one are not straightforwardly Christian-canonical. ‘Fiends’ are absent from the Authorized King James version of the Bible, with the designation perhaps most likely to have come down to mid-Victorian readers, often in the formulation ‘fiend of hell’ or ‘foul fiend’, from *Piers Plowman* and *Paradise Lost*.<sup>29</sup> *King Lear*’s ‘fiends’ are a more syncretic source of mischief, as are elves and sorceresses (the latter are condemned to death in Exodus 22.18). The invocation of demotic and diminutive perditionous personalities rather than of the devil himself registers an interest, exemplified most straightforwardly for the Victorian era by Charles Kingsley’s writing, in re-routing Christian ethics via less onerous folk-allegorical forms.

Headley’s travel writing has been linked to the nativist and anti-Catholic sentiment that animated the Know Nothing party in the United States in the 1850s; in the passage above, he shows himself to share that group’s concern for

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<sup>28</sup> Joel Tyler Headley, *The Alps and the Rhine: A Series of Sketches*. (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), p. 104.

<sup>29</sup> “fiend, n.” *OED Online*, <[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)> [accessed 12 August 2014]

purity.<sup>30</sup> The gambling lady's 'whole appearance'—the delicacy of her hands and the 'simple white' of her apparel—reflect and bear upon both her class status and her character, which—so, at least, seems to be Headley's thrust—are self-consistent categories. Her decision to place a bet is incongruous and therefore grotesque, a physiognomy profaned being 'infinitely uglier' than the sight of a subject doing what the eye already expects of him.

The key term, perhaps, is 'unbecoming': structural dissonance foreshadowing structural disintegration. Headley's narrative deploys tropes of 'equivalence and homeomorphism' that Rosa Mucignat, working from the semiotic theory of Iuri Lotman, links to the harmonizing narrative ethics of myth and folklore.<sup>31</sup> Yet the idea that ladies owe a debt to integrity while gentlemen are licenced to be made of parts also pervades modern culture; as Jessica Benjamin has observed in a study of gender, domination and psychic development, 'woman' has consistently been primed from birth to play 'primordial oneness to [man's] individuated separateness and object to his subject'.<sup>32</sup>

On close examination, Headley's description of the gambling lady rubs against his narrative's rhetorical agenda (or perhaps he is trying to accommodate two conflicting drifts). No 'whole' image of patrician virtue ever unfurls itself: the young woman's 'delicacy' and 'simplicity' sit uneasily with her 'auburn tresses' and 'profusion of jewels'. The jewelry suggests a taste for acquisition and display the discouragement of which is enshrined in across a range of Protestant pulpit traditions (see, for example, the episode with Dinah Morris and Bessy Cranage's earrings near the beginning of *Adam Bede*). 'Auburn tresses', meanwhile, was a shopworn epithet by the 1840s: Richard Altick has traced the contours of an 'anti-red hair bias'—only partially countered by the PreRaphaelite fashion of the 1850s—which led to female redheads in particular being typecast as 'beautiful—

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<sup>30</sup> See Alfred Bendixen, 'Travel books about Europe before the Civil War', in *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, ed. by Bendixen and Judith Hamera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 103-126 (p. 113).

<sup>31</sup> *Realism and Space*, p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* (London: Virago, 1990), p. 7.

and dangerous'.<sup>33</sup> Far from straightforwardly reflecting and confirming an unspoilt interior, the gambling lady's appearance can also be read as a harbinger of her ethical lapse.

Headley's moral canvas is lent further shadow by the figure of the gambling lady's husband, who stands, emotionally inscrutable for want of descriptive detail, 'behind her chair'. In *Can You Forgive Her?*, the prospect of Plantagenet's disapproval serves as an invisible bulwark against Glencora's temptation. Here, the husband of the gambling lady superintends his wife's conduct at once more closely—unlike Mr. Palliser, he keeps her in his sight—and more indulgently. His position at her back can be read as either commanding or uxorious; it might even suggest a bid for the former position that has slid perilously in the direction of impotent voyeurism. Like gifts of expensive jewellery, close watching enacts an ambivalent relation to the culturally dominant ideology of conjugal control.

Taking Headley (and, more arguably, Trollope) as our preceptor, we might conclude that detached authority rather than engaged leniency is the best way for a husband to guard against his wife's erratic inclinations. Such a reading would reflect the culturally diffused influence on Victorian family life of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* ('There is, also, another class of friendships, comprising what may be called friendships of inequality; such as is, for instance, the friendship of a father for his son, or, indeed, of any older man for a younger; or as is the friendship of a man for his wife, or of one who is in a position of authority of any kind for him who is under authority').<sup>34</sup> Tolstoi's *Family Happiness*, to which I will now turn, evinces clearer Aristotelian traces. But if secular classical writing is an important source for the pragmatic solutions seemingly favoured in Headley and Tolstoi's didactic texts—and Anthony Trollope's more ambivalent female-gambling narrative—supernatural resonances (the 'fiends' and 'sorceresses', no longer literal presences nor yet mere figures of speech, of a syncretic Christian tradition) supply a good deal of their emotional and imaginative authority.

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<sup>33</sup> See Altick, *The Presence of the Present*, pp. 316; 323.

<sup>34</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by Robert Williams (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1876), p. 233.

## The Last Temptation of Masha: Tolstoi's *Family Happiness*

Culturally routinized eschatological language and sentiment, then, are regularly deployed in writing about watering places, lending themselves particularly to the construction of female transgression—and thus, implicitly, female identity—by male writers. The *Spielbank* does not figure explicitly in all such narratives, but seems to retain, at the least, an apophatic presence: the expansive metaphoricity of gambling accommodates Glencora's 'fling'; the quasi-literal degeneracy of Headley's gambling lady; and the (almost casino-less) narrative of error to which I now turn.

Tolstoi's *Family Happiness* (*Semeinoe schast'e*, 1858) employs the 'abyss' (*bezdna*), a common epithet for the abode of the damned in both the New Testament and Dante, in figuring the education-by-erotic-trial of an inexperienced female subject at Baden-Baden. Like Glencora Palliser, Tolstoi's Masha arrives at the baths newly wed. She idealizes Sergei Mikhailovich, her much older husband, who enters the novella as her 'guardian' (*opekun*)—literally, or at least legally, a surrogate for her dead parents—and retains the role after their marriage. The couple's relationship is above all one of careful superintendence and willing submission: 'I felt entirely his, entirely happy with his power over me ('Ia chuvstvovala, chto ia vsia ego i chto ia schastлива ego vlast'iu nado mnoiu').<sup>35</sup> During one of their early meetings Sergei Mikhailovich supervises Masha at the piano, allowing her to play the *adagio* part of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor (titled *Sonata quasi una fantasia* but often referred to in English as the Moonlight Sonata) but not the (faster) *scherzo* part on the grounds that she handles the latter movement badly (72-73). When the couple leave the (protectively coded) Russian countryside (Pokrovskoe, the name of Masha's family estate, connotes a covering or shroud; Pokrov is in Russian Orthodoxy the church holiday of Intercession, commemorating the Virgin Mary's protection of the faithful) for points metropolitan, monitored *fantasia* becomes a leitmotif for the narrative: Sergei

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<sup>35</sup> 'Semeinoe schast'e', in Tolstoi, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 14 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1951), 3, pp. 69-146 (p. 107). Future references are given in parenthesis in the body of the text.

Mikhailovich first introduces Masha, despite his own distaste for it, to the dazzle of Petersburg high society. He then takes her abroad and—citing business in Heidelberg—leaves her unchaperoned at the waters.

Masha—Tolstoi's narrator—barely describes Baden-Baden. Joe Andrew has suggested that this omission communicates her increasing 'solipsism' as she revels in the superficial attentions paid to her by watering-place society.<sup>36</sup> But the narrative's topographical concision at this point—'[w]e spent the summer at the waters' ('My prozhivali leto na vodakh') (130)—also implies that Baden-Baden was a familiar enough (even ominous enough) cultural signifier not to need painting in detail. In any event, Masha initially experiences both Baden-Baden and the crowd of suitors that pursue her there as an intoxicating but undifferentiated whole:

Among all the young men I met that season there was not one that I preferred in any way to the others or even to old prince K., our ambassador, who would flirt with me. One was young, another old; one was blond and English, another French and bearded; to me they were all the same, but they were all indispensable to me. Indistinguishable as they may have been, they were a vital component of the radiant atmosphere surrounding me.

[Из числа всей молодежи этого сезона не было ни одного человека, которого бы я чем-нибудь отличала от других или даже от старого князя К., нашего посланника, который ухаживал за мной. Один был молодой, другой старый, один белокурый англичанин, другой француз с бородкой, все они мне были равны, но все они были мне необходимы. Это были все одинаково безразличные лица, составлявшие радостную атмосферу жизни, окружавшую меня.]

(131)

Baden-Baden had by the 1850s a reputation as a place in which flirtation (at the very least) was a consecrated social ritual ('There were women whose husbands, and men whose wives were at home', notes Thackeray winkingly of

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<sup>36</sup>Joe Andrew, *Narrative, Space and Gender in Russian Fiction, 1846-1903* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), p. 95.

Rougetnoirbourg in *The Kickleburys on their Travels*).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, there is even a—counterintuitive—sense in which the idea of watering places as havens of temporarily sanctioned illicit intimacy between the sexes may (according to a similar principle to that which dictates that a generous holiday allowance produces harder-working employees) have helped render them socially acceptable destinations for married women travelling alone (and a respectable solution for unhappy wives like Alexandrina Crosbie in *The Small House At Allington*). At the heart of Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, after all, is the suggestion that a temporally and spatially circumscribed pantomime of free association—a holiday from considerations of rank and respectability—effectively fortifies the very different morality governing everyday conduct.

For Tolstoi, however—ever the opponent of theatricals—this atmosphere of unreality appears to be precisely the problem with the waters. Everything that Masha enjoys about Baden-Baden turns out on reflection to have been illusory—or to pertain only to surfaces:

I was by that time twenty-one and our financial affairs were, *I believed*, in good order [...] Everyone I knew, *it seemed to me*, loved me; my health was good; I was the best-dressed woman at the waters; I knew that I was good-looking; the weather was wonderful; *an atmosphere of* beauty and elegance surrounded me; and I was very happy. I was not so happy as I had once been at Nikol'skoe, when I had felt that my happiness came from within, that I was happy because I deserved to be happy, and that my happiness, however great, could be expected to grow and grow. That had been a different situation, but I was happy this summer too [...] My life, *it seemed*, was full and my conscience clear [...].

[Мне было тогда двадцать один год, состояние наше, я думала, было в цветущем положении [...] все, кого я знала, мне казалось, любили меня; здоровье мое было хорошо, туалеты мои были лучшие на водах, я знала, что я была хороша, погода была прекрасна, какая-то атмосфера красоты и изящества окружала меня, и мне было очень весело. Я не так была весела, как бывала в Никольском, когда я чувствовала, что я счастлива сама в себе, что я счастлива потому, что заслужила это счастье, что счастье мое велико, но должно быть еще больше, что все

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<sup>37</sup> *The Kickleburys*, p. 44.

хочется еще и еще счастья. Тогда было другое; но и в это лето мне было хорошо [...] Жизнь моя, казалось мне, была полна, и на совести, казалось, было покойно[...]]

(130-131; my italics)

Masha's husband has tried to inculcate in her an ethic of interiority, self-abnegation and self-sufficiency derived from the Synoptic Gospels. (Sergei Mikhailovich's messianic aspect is enhanced in the text by the luminosity of his presence ('It was as if our old [...] gloomy house had suddenly been filled with life and light'; 'Kak budto vdrug nash staryi, mrachnyi [...] dom napolnilsia zhizn'iu i svetom'; 75); by his association, like Levin in *Anna Karenina*, with scenes of agricultural labour (83); and by certain angelological resonances—he makes rhetorical reference late in the text (142) to the impossibility of his growing wings)). Early in their courtship, he instructs her that 'it is a fault not to be able to endure loneliness' ("[e]to nekhoroшо ne umet' perenosit' odinochestva"). It ill becomes a young lady (*baryshnia*), he further warns, to live a life in which 'everything [is] just for show and nothing is kept for oneself' ('vse tol'ko dlia pokazu, a dlia sebia nichego'; 73). For grief and lethargy after her mother's death he prescribes action ('occupy yourself more, do not pine ('pobol'she zanimaites, ne khandrite'; 74) and altruism ('he [...] taught me to look differently at our people—our peasants, [...] and servant girls [...] he said that there is only one happiness in life: to live for others' ('on [...] nauchil menia smotret' na nashikh liudei, krest'ian, dvorovykh, devushek sovsem inache [...] on govoril, chto v zhizni est' tol'ko odno nesomnennoe schast'e – zhit' dlia drugogo'; 82).

It is in St. Petersburg, where the couple winter immediately after their marriage, that Masha's head begins to be turned by balls and admirers. Yet the climate of a fashionable foreign spa represents the gravest threat of all to the New Testament ethic Sergei Mikhailovich has impressed upon his young wife. Watering-place social life privileges exterior appearances, material satisfaction and a (deceptive) sense of well being (the pun is inadvertent) derived from others' praise. Pursuing a Manichaean moral dualism that touches both place and personality, Tolstoi sets up an opposition between Sergei Mikhailovich and the

Italian marquis who emerges from the crowd of ‘indistinguishable’ suitors to seduce Masha in her husband’s absence. The devil is ‘god of this world’ (2 Corinthians 4:4) and the marquis too is a decidedly uncelestial figure: his friends refer to him a ‘happy mortal’ (‘schastlivyi smertnyi’; 133).

Moreover, in a self-ironizing metafictional gesture, the Italian’s taste for narrative is evinced as evidence of his flawed character. Echoing Grushnitskii in Lermontov’s *A Hero Of Our Time*, he claims that ‘to make a novel out of one’s life is the only thing worth doing’ (‘delat’ roman iz zhizni odno, chto est’ khoroshego’) (133). Masha, too, is an avid reader of novels, but, as is often the case with women in nineteenth-century fiction, her self-aestheticization is pursued without self-awareness and does her more harm as a result. Sergei Mikhailovich, unlike both Masha and the marquis, shares Tolstoi’s (self-chastening) suspicion of fiction as pretence. Detesting ‘emotional scenes’ (‘chuvstvitel’nye tseny’, (126; 136), he devotes his energies to practical matters like business and farming.

The marquis—whose passions apart from fiction include dancing, riding and the casino—can be read a metonym for spa culture as a whole (just as Sergei Mikhailovich redoles of the hearth). But, in a gesture that simultaneously empowers and destabilizes the Manichaeian structure of his narrative, Tolstoi also makes of him a devil in uncannily familiar form:

He was young, good looking, elegant and, *most importantly, his smile and expression resembled my husband’s* although they were much more handsome. He startled me with this resemblance, *although, in fact, in his lips, in the look he wore, and in his long beard, instead of the delightful expression of goodness and ideal peace of my husband, there was something coarse and animal-like* [my italics].

[Он был молод, хорош собой, элегантен и, главное, улыбкой и выражением лба похож на моего мужа, хотя и гораздо лучше его. Он поражал меня этим сходством, хотя в общем, в губах, во взгляде, в длинном подбородке, вместо прелести выражения доброты и идеального спокойствия моего мужа, у него было что-то грубое, животное [...].

(131; my italics)



The Italian's charms are winning but latently bestial; he appears, as ruinous phantasms in eschatological narratives often do, to hold out the promise of perfect satisfaction—to reconcile the sensual and the moral, consolation and excitement. It is among the offices of Christian morality (and not least through the libidinally regulatory institution of marriage) to counter the attractiveness of such propositions by exposing them as delirious and egotistical sham. Accordingly, Masha's fleeting desire to give into the marquis' advances collocates the erotic, the venal and the perditionous:

I felt an irresistible longing to surrender myself to the kisses of that coarse handsome mouth, and to be embraced by those white hands with their delicate veins and jewelled fingers; I was tempted to throw myself headlong into the abyss of forbidden delights that had suddenly opened up before me. I thought, "I am so unhappy [...] Why not let more and more shame and sin come down upon my head!"

[Так непреодолимо хотелось мне отдаться поцелуям этого грубого и красивого рта, объятиям этих белых рук с тонкими жилами и с перстнями на пальцах. Так тянуло меня броситься очертя голову в открывшуюся вдруг, притягивающую бездну запрещенных наслаждений [...]—Я так несчастна [...]ускай, пускай еще и еще накапливается стыд и грех на мою голову—].

(134)

'[F]orbidden delights' ('zapreshchennye naslazhdeniia') invokes the 'forbidden fruit' ('zapretnyi plod') of Genesis. The image of the 'abyss' ('bezdna'), together with the marquis's 'burning eyes' ('goriashchie glaza') and the electrifying rather than illuminating effect of his presence ('fire ran through my veins' ('ogon' probegala po moim zhilam') (134), evokes the Book of Revelation and hints ('His eyes are like a flame of fire [...] and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself') at a secret purpose behind Masha's trials (see below).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The verse is from Revelation 19. 12. See *New Revised Standard Edition of the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 278.

The marquis's jewelry echoes the dangerous sartoriality of Joel Tyler Headley's gambling lady; more abstractly, the yawn of Masha's 'abyss' parallels Glencora Palliser's 'opening' at roulette. Though at the last moment she draws back from the *salto mortale* of adultery, Masha's seduction—etymologically, a leading to one side—brings home to her that her happiness at the waters has been a chimera.

After her frisson, Masha flees Baden-Baden for Heidelberg—a bastion of reason rather than the passions. Reunited with Sergei Mikhailovich, she longs for the ordinances of confession and expiation (“I will tell him everything, everything—I will cry tears of repentance before him [...] and he will forgive me” (“Ia vsio vsio skazhu emu, vse vyplachu pered nim slezami raskaiania [...] i on prostit menia”)) (136). But her husband seems mysteriously intent on denying her catharsis: ‘Why did he always avoid explanations?’ (144). Masha is further upset that Sergei came so close to allowing her to fall in the first place: “Why did you not exercise your power? [...] I should have been happy, instead of being ashamed” (“Zachem izbegal ob’iasneniia? [...] Zachem ne upotrebil ty svoiu vlast’ [...]? [...]M]ne by khorosho, ne stydno bylo”) (144).

Her preceptor, it emerges over the course of several regrettably ‘emotional scenes’, conceives of Masha’s ordeal, including her betrayal of him, as a rite of passage. The result might be framed as lapsarian consciousness of original sin or a Hegelian arrival at the self through self-alienation; either way, it marks an initiation into womanhood. Masha cannot be happy with virtue without having first tasted virtue’s converse:

“All of us—but especially you women—have to have gone through all the foolishness of life before we can return to life itself; we cannot take another’s word for it. You are still far from having done with that charming and pleasant foolishness that I admired in you. I left you alone so that you might experience it; I felt that I did not have the right to constrain you.”

[<Всем нам, а особенно вам, женщинам, надо прожить самим весь вздор жизни, для того чтобы вернуться к самой жизни; а другому верить нельзя. Ты еще далеко не прожила тогда этот прелестный и милый вздор, на который я любовался в тебе; и я

оставлял тебя выживать его и чувствовал, что не имел права стеснять тебя [...]>].

(144)

In this light, the marquis's physical resemblance to Masha's husband takes on a new significance. Recalling New Testament scenarios of non-recognition—Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection and to the disciples on the road to Emmaus—we might re-read the Heidelberg absence of Sergei Mikhailovich to uncover a radiant presence (“Je vous aime”, [the marquis] whispered in a voice that was so like my husband's’ (“—Je vous aime,—prosheptal on golosom, kotoryi byl tak pokhozh na golos moego muzha”) (135). Husband and seducer begin to look less like polar opposites and more like a didactic unity.

In a further Manichaean twist (though Sergei's appeal—above—to the language of rights complicates the arrangement), a key structuring opposition in the narrative is between the—divine, interiorized—light that illuminates ('svet') and the—worldly, materialized—light that blinds. Tolstoi achieves this opposition partly through wordplay: in Russian 'svet' connotes not only 'light' but also 'world' and 'society'. “It is in you” (“V vas est”; 74;81), Sergei Mikhailovich repeatedly tells Masha—and the most reasonable construction we can put on his gnomic appreciation is that what is *in* Masha is (divine) light. After her seduction she reproaches him: “Why did you let me live in society [svet], if it seemed so harmful to you [...]?” (“Zachem ty mne pozvolil zhit' v svete, ezheli on tak vreden tebe kazalsia [...]?”). “*That* is not the light [svet], my friend”; “Ne svet, moi drug”; 144), replies her husband.

In *Family Happiness*, Baden-Baden epitomizes the ‘nonsense’ (*vzdor*) that masquerades as ‘svet’. Seen in terms of the novellas's tripartite (countryside-city-spa) ethico-spatial structure, the spa represents the dangerous outer limits of worldly conduct—perhaps because the world exerts its gravity more subtly there. To leave the waters (coded, we might say, *scherzo*) for the (*adagio*) moral safety of home is to renounce the sensual—to choose, as Andrew has it, ‘agape rather

than eros'.<sup>39</sup> It is also to renounce a self-dramatizing taste for love affairs (*romany*) fostered by the reading of novels (*romany*). (Tolstoi gives no indication of Masha's reading tastes, but we might expect her to have read Lermontov's, and even Scott's, spa fictions.) Perhaps most importantly in this narrative of female *Bildung*, it is to have negotiated the tutelary temptations that are a necessary precursor to the relief promised in the novella's title.

I glanced at my husband. His eyes smiled as he looked at me; and I looked into them with an ease and happiness which I had not felt for a long time [...] That day ended my love affair [*roman*] with my husband [...] A new feeling of love for my children and the father of my children laid the foundation for a new life, and for a quite different kind of happiness [...].

[Я взглянул на мужа, глаза его смеялись глядя на мои, и мне на первый раз после долгого времени легко и радостно было смотреть в них [...] С этого дня кончился мой роман с мужем [...] Новое чувство любви к детям и к отцу моих детей положило начало другой но уже совершенно иначе счастливой жизни [...]]

(146)

#### Demons and Skeuomorphs: Reflections on Allegory and Realist Narrative

'Bonne chance, mon ami', whispers a friend of Tolstoi's marquis as he embarks upon his Baden-Baden seduction (133). Although the casino is mentioned only in passing in *Family Happiness*, its aleatory spirit—and the lurching sense of everything staked—pervades the spa sections of the narrative. The Italian's 'play' for Masha tempts only a temporary chastening of the ego, his levity recalling Thackeray's sense, in *The Newcomes*, of gambling as 'sport'. Masha's jeopardy as a unitary—that is, female—subject is altogether graver, but her longing to cast

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<sup>39</sup>Andrew, *Narrative, Space and Gender*, p. 101.

herself ('brosit'sia') into the 'abyss' also sustains an association with dice, roulette balls and thrown-down cards.

The figural (as well as literal) pervasiveness in spa narratives of high-stakes gambling (in the sense of assets speculated in the hope of extravagant gain or in the face of overwhelming compulsion) admits a fairly mundane psychological explanation. Masha's temptation in *Family Happiness*, the Robertses' wager in Frances Trollope's *The Robertses on their Travels* (see Chapter 6) that a season at Baden-Baden will radically improve their social standing, Roderick Hudson's embrace of hazard, the chance Litvinov takes on an old love in Turgenev's *Smoke* (see Chapter 4), and Sanin's similar play, on a much worse wicket, in the same author's *Spring Torrents*: all can be linked to the sense of promise or of a clearing of accounts that often goes together with respite and travel. In this reading spa gambling's status as a narrative expedient is difficult to separate from the watering place's status as a social one.

But the prevalence of speculative themes in spa texts also brings to mind Erich Auerbach's concept of the 'harmony motif', drawn out in *Mimesis* with extended reference to Balzac's *Père Goriot* (1835). For Balzac's narrator, the petticoat worn by the Parisian boarding-house proprietor Madame Vauquer 'sums up the drawing room, the dining room, the little garden, announces the cooking and gives an inkling of the boarders. When she is there, the spectacle is complete'. Auerbach's term for the narrative technique whereby place, personality and procedure are made to live out a kind of transcendental affinity is 'atmospheric realism':

Balzac feels his milieux [...] as demonic and indeed organic unities and seeks to convey this feeling to the reader. He not only, like Stendhal, places the human beings whose destiny he is seriously relating in their precisely defined historical and social setting, but also conceives of this connection as a necessary one; to him every milieu becomes a moral and physical atmosphere which impregnates the landscape, the dwelling, furniture, implements,

clothing, physique, character, surroundings, ideas, activities and the fates of men [...].<sup>40</sup>

Balzac's narrative technique seeks to reconcile contingency and moral necessity, the individual character of people and things and a nebulous determinism. The figural omnipresence of the casino in nineteenth-century writing on Continental spas testifies to the appeal for writers of such an aesthetic interfusion of 'moral and physical atmosphere'. But gambling's part in nineteenth-century watering-place narratives seems to me 'demonic' also in the sense that it threatens to overwhelm and subdue, from a representational point of view, everything else about spa culture (the Hebrew word *śatan* means 'adversary' or 'obstructor').<sup>41</sup> The slow burn of leisured sociability, the itchy, painful tick of time on one's hands, the trials of therapy efficacious or otherwise: such lines of topo-graphic and psychospacial inquiry develop stuntedly in the shadow cast by the green baize.

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After about 1860 (*Can You Forgive Her?* is slightly anachronistic in this respect), roulette rather than rouge-et-noir becomes the dominant gambling metaphor in writing about spas. The figural prominence of the wheel in *Daniel Deronda*, in Dostoevskii's *The Gambler* (see below) and other resort fictions of the 1860s and 1870s serves, apart from anything else it might communicate, as one marker of a kind of (piecemeal) metaphoric changing-of-the-guard, gathering pace after 1840 and involving the displacement of classic allegorical touchstones by technologically inscribed images. Accepting this as a normal discursive correlate of larger, *longue-durée* processes of cultural secularization and technologization, it comes naturally to inquire about changes to the narrative work done by and expected of those older figural forms that undoubtedly survived and even flourished alongside the new in a highly syncretic metaphorical environment.

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<sup>40</sup> See Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp 470-473.

<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, 'Devil' in *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, gen. ed. David Lyle Jeffrey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 199-202.

How, to put it bluntly, did demons and sorceresses hold their own, imaginatively speaking, in an age of machine imagery?

As the above readings of the spa texts of Thackeray, Trollope, Headley and Tolstoi suggest, eschatological allegory at times appears to serve what might be called a *skeuomorphic* function in mid-nineteenth century narrative. ('Skeuomorph' is the name given in the field of design to a feature of a product that is not essential to the product's operation but which is included in order to provoke an orientative association with related, usually earlier instrumental forms. Examples include the note-taking application on many computers, made to resemble yellow notepaper.) This is to say that what images of perdition seem to do above all in broadly realist texts is not provide an interpretative key, derived from still-sacrosanct cultural narratives, to the meanings, reasons and consequences of contemporary phenomena, but rather channel the enduring sensate *force* of such narratives—setting off trains of feeling rather than procedural thought. This does not mean that extramundane allegory becomes a purely decorative or ornamental quantity, but rather that its affective commission changes (carving out, so to speak, a more phenomenological niche) to meet the requirements of the age. 'Fiends' and the 'abyss', worn into often-inattentive, idiomatic usage, are not necessarily shorn of power or credence (although, detached from chapter and verse, they can want for didactic specificity). Like the glowing 'coals' on some modern electric fires, perdition motifs orient the reader as to the moral thrust of contemporary practices, furnishing a bridge between older and newer ways of existing in the world.

Of course, by no means all mid-nineteenth century writing favours such a 'skeuomorphic' allegory of traces. George Eliot directly invokes the Old Testament narrative of the Fall ('Woman was tempted by a serpent [...]') in the Gwendolen-gambling passages of *Daniel Deronda*. These words, however, are put in the mouths of bystanders and, prompted by Gwendolen's green and silver evening dress, Eliot's narrator takes the classical-mythological personification 'Nereid' or sea nymph as her own reference point. When Eliot's narrator does reach directly for Christian-allegorical personification ('when any of Vanity's large family, male or female, find their performance received coldly, they are apt to believe that a

little more of it will win over the unaccountable dissident'), the feeling is jocund and self-consciously conventional.<sup>42</sup>

Sensation fiction, always a fascinating blend of up-to-dateness and atavism, goes in for allegory too, but tends to bypass cosmological *grands récits* (such as the story of the Fall) in favour of earthier eschatological scenes derived from the Synoptic Gospels. In *Black Sheep* (1867), a lasciviously moralistic novel, Edmund Yates conjures storms over Bad Homburg as the villainous (and adulterous) Stewart Routh gambles for his soul. "What devil is in you", asks Routh of his usually docile wife Harriet when she implores him to stop playing, "to prompt you to exasperate me [...]?" "What devil is in *you*", Harriet counters, "that is prompting you to your ruin?" (Yates might have us believe that Stewart is infested with the spirit of the place.)<sup>43</sup> At its least sophisticated, eschatological allegory represents a way of forcing felt meaning—a straining after the gravity that brooks no understanding.

The deployment of classic allegorical imagery can also appear to signal a refusal of interpretation—or to mark the limits of a text's engagement and sympathy. Thackeray's narrator Mr. Titmarsh gives full coverage of the social world of Rougetnoirbourg—which he finds 'a pretty little gay, wicked place [...] a motley gallery'—from the aristocratic Lady Kicklebury and New York *nouveaux riches* down to con artists and washerwomen; like Smollett in *Humphrey Clinker*, he finds the socio-demographic variety of resort culture to be a major part of its raffish appeal.<sup>44</sup> Anthony Trollope, on the other hand, presents Baden-Baden's lower orders only through Alice Vavasor's alarmed eschatological eye. Trollope is famously a realist of Victorian upper-bourgeois experience; Kevin Swafford has characterized his fiction as a project to 'communicate the truths, conflicts and desires of the British ruling classes'. The fiendish alterity of the women gamblers of Baden-Baden bars them from all but negative, contrastive participation in the human drama of *Can You Forgive Her?* Alice and the

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<sup>42</sup>Daniel Deronda, 1., pp. 12-13.

<sup>43</sup> Edmund Yates, *Black Sheep*, 3 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers. 1867), 3, p. 44.

<sup>44</sup> *The Kickleburys*, p. 43.



narrative register their fearfulness before precipitately turning away.<sup>45</sup>

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The diabolical tendencies of the nineteenth century's watering-place text help flag up a paradox fundamental to industrial modernity. Franco Moretti has written penetratingly of the '[t]he Victorian enigma: *contra* [...] the *Communist Manifesto*, the most industrialized, urbanized, 'advanced' capitalism of the age *restores* 'fervours' and 'sentimentalism' instead of sweeping them away'.<sup>46</sup> Joel Tyler Headley's visions of preternatural ugliness and Edmund Yates's invocation of demonic possession are embedded in a suitably unsentimental modern socio-economic reality, but nonetheless reflect the broadly Tacitean view that not abstract 'forces' but 'vices and virtues' govern social, historical and individual outcomes.<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth Deeds Ermath has written that the mid-nineteenth century, with Comte and Darwin important influences, saw 'providential' and 'naturalizing' fictional accounts of human conduct and morality in which 'poetic justice' prevails yield significantly to 'socialized', 'secular' and 'developmental' ones.<sup>48</sup> Writing about the spa, a locus whose hot springs already commingle the providential and secular, helps map the shift, framing it as a matter of style and surface as well as epistemological deep-structure—and underscoring its status as a phenomenon of proportions rather than a rout.

Having underlined the role played by eschatological allegory in the moral accounting that mid-nineteenth century narrative so assiduously conducts with respect to resort culture, I want to turn now to an antithetical discussion. The second half of this chapter will discuss two watering-place texts, published fifty years apart, that communicate a sense of modern socio-spatial experience as placing near-intolerable strain on the levees erected by a binarizing ethico-narrative tradition.

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<sup>45</sup> Swafford, *Class in Late-Victorian Britain: The Narrative Concern with Social Hierarchy and its Representation* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press), xii,

<sup>46</sup> Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, p. 108.

<sup>47</sup> See Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> Ermath, *History*, pp. 3-8.

In *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, John Carey writes of the positive coding of fog in modern art. Modernists from Gautier to Whistler value it because its vapours 'expunge[s] fact and realism'.<sup>49</sup> Fog clears the air by fouling it up—by precluding the single interpretation and the indisputable insight.

A defining urban figural phenomenon in nineteenth-century fiction—I am thinking particularly of *Bleak House* and Gogol's 'The Nose' ('Nos')—such murk is at first look difficult to reconcile with resort culture, Baden-Baden in particular being celebrated almost as much for its 'pure air impregnated with sweet perfumes and salubrious emanations' as for its waters.<sup>50</sup> Yet a narratological analogue for fog is the enshrouding agency of the perplexed narrator, dimming even Black Forest air. What I want to set up now is a contrast between the spa texts discussed so far in this chapter—all of which employ allegory as a kind of numinous ethical touchstone—and the presiding voices, as trenchantly obtuse in their pursuit of clarity as they are 'unreliable', in two exceptional novels about long hot seasons at German watering places: Dostoevskii's *The Gambler* (1867) and Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915).

Most nineteenth-century writing on resort culture adopts a broadly omniscient narrative stance—George Eliot's focalization of Gwendolen through Daniel in the Leubronn gambling scene that opens *Daniel Deronda* is a partial exception. But both Dostoevskii and Ford construct their watering-place narratives in such a way as to radically destabilize the authority and ethical coherence of the portrait. In contrast to Trollope, Headley and company, when the narrators of *The Gambler* and *The Good Soldier* deploy traces of religious and eschatological allegory, the sense is less that erstwhile moral totems have taken on the status of rhetorical or sensorial aids to social arguments—and rather that totems and arguments are no longer distinguishable with anything like final conviction.

The lines of affinity linking Ford—half-German, Francophile and famously

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<sup>49</sup> John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London: Faber, 1992), p. 32.

<sup>50</sup> Guinot, *A Summer at Baden-Baden*, pp. 194-195.

clubbable—and Dostoevskii—a national chauvinist and a cultivator of grudges—are not immediately obvious. Biography and personal sympathy rather link Ford—via Henry James, his East Sussex neighbour in the early years of the twentieth century—to Turgenev. Both James—carefully, in ‘Ivan Turgenieff’ (1874)—and Ford—immoderately, in a 1936 essay called ‘Turgenev, the Beautiful Genius’—registered in print their admiration for the latter Russian; Ford claimed, (it may well be a Fordian fib) to remember sitting on Turgenev’s knee as an eight-year-old boy.<sup>51</sup> But while James and Turgenev’s spa fictions have a good deal in common (I noted in the last chapter plot similarities between *Smoke* and ‘Eugene Pickering’), it is a work by Turgenev’s contemporary and antagonist that Ford’s watering-place novel most resembles, especially in its cultivation of narratorial bafflement.

Ford ‘confessed’ in a 1914 essay on *The Idiot* to ‘having formed no settled opinion about Dostoievsky (*sic*) [...] I almost wish he had never written; I regard his works with envy, with fear, with admiration. I seem to see him on the horizon as a dark cloud [...]’. For Ford, who regarded his and Joseph Conrad’s literary doctrine, Impressionism, as an innovation in realist technique, Dostoevskii is ‘Romantic [...] a reversion [...] His characters are extraordinarily vivid; but they are too vivid for the Realist school. They are too much always, in one note; they develop little; they are static’.<sup>52</sup> Yet, as I will suggest, Ford himself registers in *The Good Soldier*—and as both a psychological and narrative truth—the sense of arrest he perceived (and apparently did not appreciate) in Dostoevskii. More straightforward common ground between the two writers, meanwhile, is that both summered at German watering place under vivid personal circumstances and both made fiction out of the experience.

Ford—or rather Ford Madox Hueffer; he did not adopt the reduplicative surname Ford until 1919—spent August of 1910 in Bad Nauheim with Violet Hunt, in part to escape the fallout from the pair’s adulterous-cum-bigamous affair. Their stay generated material for Hunt’s *The Desirable Alien at Home in*

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<sup>51</sup> See *Ivan Turgenev and Britain*, ed. by Patrick Waddington (Oxford: Berg, 1995), pp. 149-162.

<sup>52</sup> Ford Madox Ford, ‘Fyodor Dostoevsky and *The Idiot*’, in *Critical Essays*, ed. by Max Saunders and Richard Stang (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002), pp. 126-129.

*Germany* (1913), a chatty travel memoir to which Ford contributed two chapters and whose account of Nauheim I draw on throughout this study. But the sojourn also resulted in *The Good Soldier*, generally recognized, alongside *Parade's End* (1924-28), as Ford's masterpiece.

More than forty years earlier, in 1867, Dostoevskii had travelled from St Petersburg to Baden-Baden with his new wife (and former stenographer) Anna Grigor'evna. Dostoevskii had made several previous trips to German watering places: during one 1865 stay in Wiesbaden, he gambled himself broke and in desperation borrowed fifty thalers from Turgenev, a loan that has become part of biographical lore. But, in a striking case of life repeating art, it is the Dostoevskiis' 1867 honeymoon visit to Baden-Baden that most closely parallels the histrionic, daemonic atmosphere of *The Gambler*, dictated to Anna the previous October.

Anna was twenty-one in the summer of 1867, Dostoevskii forty-five: the difference in age echoes Tolstoi's *Family Happiness*, but in this case the relationship of superintendence was the other way round. At Baden-Baden Dostoevskii appears to have given himself up not only to gambling but also to high dudgeon and rudeness to the locals. Anna, trying to hold things together, wrote in her diary of 'this *damned* [my italics] Baden [...] This foul little burg where we have been so unhappy' ('[E]to prokliaty Baden [...] Etot skvernyi gorodishko, gde my byli tak neschastlivi'). Omens abound in her account of the waters: it is intolerably hot; storm clouds fill the sky (as they do during the gambling passages of Yates's *Black Sheep*, also published in 1867). A bell-tower effigy of St. Peter turns his back on the couple's lodging-house window; and Fedor Mikhailovich loses and loses again—as if the hex were on him.<sup>53</sup> One wonders whether Anna registered the uncanniness: diabolic motifs (nothing quite so *outré* as a sulking St. Peter but compelling nonetheless) and the intercalated narrative dynamics of the diary also pervade the novella that had helped fund the Dostoevskiis' summer in Europe.

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<sup>53</sup>Anna Dostoevskaia, *Dnevnik 1867a goda* (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), p. 204-205.

‘If not quite a system then at least some sort of order’: Roulette as Narrative Metaphor in *The Gambler*

*The Gambler*, written in little over a month to pay debts partly accrued at play, was originally to have been titled *Roulettenburg*. The novella is narrated in the form of a diary by Aleksei Mikhailovich, impoverished tutor to the family of General Zagorianskii. Its subject is two furious passions conceived by Aleksei during a season at the spa: for Polina, the general’s stepdaughter; and for roulette. Dostoevskii’s 1863 plan for the novel introduced his narrator as ‘a man who is straightforward, highly cultured, and yet in every respect unfinished, a man who has lost his faith but who does not dare not to believe, and who rebels against the established order and yet fears it’.<sup>54</sup> Aleksei’s loss of religious faith is not made explicit in the finished work. But his efforts to work out ‘if not some kind of system then at least some kind of order’ at roulette and to understand the hidden social, financial and sexual dynamics that appear to frustrate his courtship of Polina reflect a determined resistance to the dread contingency of an unmoored fate.

Marking the perplexities of this logocentric pursuit, which Aleksei frantically chronicles in the diary that is a formal mirror of the ‘shapelessness’ (*bezobrazie*) into which the search for a winning formula perennially threatens to descend, *The Gambler* unfolds what is perhaps Dostoevskii’s most succinct statement on the possibility and desirability of systematic narrative.

Aleksei Mikhailovich belongs to a long line of Dostoevskian splenetics, most of whom—Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, Rogozhin in *The Idiot*, Kirillov in *The Devils*, the underground man—grapple rather more openly with the problem of belief or its absence. Aleksei, by contrast, is not an abstract thinker: his thirst is for practical insight and his inability to get it leads to frantic divination.

*The Gambler*’s opening lines find Aleksei, newly returned to Roulettenburg after a two-week absence, desperately reading conspiracy into the behaviour of his employers: ‘[i]t was clear that they had got hold of money from

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<sup>54</sup> Cited in Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years 1865-1871* (London: Robson, 1995), p. 170.

somewhere. It even seemed to me that the general looked at me somewhat shamefacedly [...Polina Aleksandrovna] went away somewhere. Clearly she did this on purpose' ('Bylo iasno, chto oni gdie-nibud' perekhvatili deneg. Mne pokazalos' dazhe, chto generalu neskol'ko sovestno gliadet' na menia [...Polina Aleksandrovna] ushla kuda-to. Razumeetsia, ona sdelala eto narочно').<sup>55</sup> Aleksei attempts to reconstruct, by both interrogation and harangue, the fabric of events and motives ('I started to ask questions about what had happened in my absence' ('Ia stal rassprashivat' o tom, chto sdelalos' v moe otsutstvie')) (212). But obsessive questioning coupled with introverted meditation only seems to lead the mind further from its analytic object; as H. Porter Abbott has observed in an important study of fictional diaries, far from simply recording impressions, thought and the recording of thought exert world-changing agency.<sup>56</sup> Aleksei's misreadings and overreadings—especially with respect to female desire and the link between wealth and love—thicken the plot, keep comprehension at bay and advance Dostoevskii's narrative.

Aleksei's pathological taste for latency is encouraged by the devious and mercenary social atmosphere of Roulettenburg, a place where nobody—it seems—is quite as they seem. General Zagorianskii lives in ostentatious luxury at the spa but is in fact bankrupt. He is desperate for an inheritance from an elderly relative whom everybody believes to be close to death (she is actually far from it and eventually turns up at the waters to gamble). A pair of imposters—the soi-disant Marquis de Grioux and Mlle. Blanche, an expensive courtesan—prey on the general's suite, hoping in their turn for a payoff.

But Aleksei also finds duplicity where there is none to be had. He not only torments himself with the idea that his love-object Polina is unattainable because he cannot compete with the apparent wealth of de Grioux. Racked by suspicion and *ressentiment*, he also imagines Polina as a *belle dame sans merci* rather than as the young woman in an unenviable position the reader quickly feels her to be. The English sugar merchant Mr. Astley, a third Roulettenburg suitor and a lone

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<sup>55</sup> *Igrok* in Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, 30 vols (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), 5, pp. 208-318 (p. 208). Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>56</sup> See H. Porter Abbott, *Diary Fiction: Writing as Action* (Cornell University Press, 1984).

voice of practical reason in Dostoevskii's narrative, struggles in vain to temper Aleksei's increasingly wild interpretations of the conduct of others.

Aleksei's attempt to win Polina incorporates a combination—sometimes a conflation—of worldly and martyrological stratagems. He first offers, as proof of his devotion, to 'throw himself head first' ('brosit'sia vniz golovoiu' (214)) from the top of the Schlangenberg, a nearby mountain. (*Schlangen* is the German for snake, so the suggestion has lapsarian undertones; but Dostoevskii is also alluding to the Hesse water resort of Schlangenbad, near Wiesbaden.) Polina's weary insistence that such an act would be 'completely useless to her' ('sovershenno dlia menia bezpolezno') (231) only just deters him. Aleksei's projected plummet brings *The Gambler* into implicit dialogue with Tolstoi's *Family Happiness* (not to mention *Can You Forgive Her?*), which, as we have seen, employs the image of the abyss to figure overmastering desire. But Aleksei literalizes Masha's metaphor and projects his own 'fall' as a wanton—rather than a tormented—lapse; ever self-conscious, he prefers to construct his passion along active, Dionysian lines rather than acknowledging himself as the object of forces beyond his control. If Tolstoi's points of reference for Masha's temptation are indisputably evangelical, the *fons et origo* of Aleksei's bravado is the Romantic profanity of the suicide.

Failing to impress Polina by proposing to kill himself and convinced she will only love him if he becomes rich, Aleksei turns to roulette. Polina frames his growing obsession with the game—which she has initially encouraged in the hope that his winnings will save her from having either to marry de Grioux or hope for her step-grandmother to die—in eschatological terms (“So you really continue to believe that roulette offers your only hope for salvation?” (“Tak vy reshitel’no prodolzhaete verit’, chto ruletka vash edinstvennyi iskhod i spasenie?”) (219)) Aleksei, though he initially sees his gambling as yet another grand gesture of self-sacrifice, soon begins to conceive of victory at the tables as an *intellectual* project, with one of its potential rewards the satisfaction of having lighted on a winning formula:

I deduced [from observing the play] what seemed to me a reliable conclusion: namely, that out of the flow of fortuitous chance emerges if not quite a system then at least some sort of order—albeit a very strange one. For example, after the middle numbers turned up twelve times or so, a dozen or so higher numbers would follow [...].

[[Я] вывел одно заключение, которое, кажется, верно: действительно, в течении случайных шансов бывает хоть и не система, но как будто какой-то порядок, что, конечно, очень странно. Например, бывает, что после двенадцати средних цифр наступают двенадцать последних; два раза, положим, удар ложится на эти двенадцать последних и переходит на двенадцать первых [...]]

(223)

In its conviction that ratiocination can expedite a chiliasm—the one great triumph that will redeem all losses—this kind of gambling psychology echoes the integrated epistemological economy of medieval scholasticism. Aleksei's fierce refusals of face value, which include his reluctance to see the roulette wheel as a symbol of the cold intransigence of statistical probability, evoke the Pauline definition of faith from Hebrews 11.1 ('the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen').<sup>57</sup>

But Aleksei is far from identifying himself as a Christian intellectual in the medieval (or even the Dostoevskian) mould. Despite all his efforts to control his destiny he nonetheless views himself as a 'fatalist' (*fatalist*) (231)—a Romantic heir to Lermontov's Pechorin. Both the initial counterintuitiveness of this claim in the context of Aleksei's pursuit of Polina and attempts to develop a system at roulette and an increasing sense, as the novella progresses and he starts to throw systems to the wind that it might be a just characterization after all, remind us that the defining scene of Dostoevskii's narrative is less the spa or even the casino than the *diary*—a classic locus of unconcluded self-scrutiny and self-making.

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<sup>57</sup> *New Revised Standard Edition*, p. 240.



For Dostoevskii's biographer Joseph Frank, *The Gambler* is '[a] brilliantly ambivalent commentary [...] on the Russian national character.'<sup>58</sup> Frank's reading has much to recommend it. Roulettenburg is a gallery of ethno-psychological archetypes, from the sober Englishman Mr. Astley to the calculating Frenchman de Griex. Aleksei, a furious patriot with a particular distaste for Germans, speaks with indignation of attacks made on Russia in the French political daily *Opinion Nationale* (211); the newspaper's title also offers a droll commentary on Aleksei's own criteria of value.

Yet if Roulettenburg functions as a microcosm of European civilization—a stage upon which Russia's vexed place vis-à-vis the West can be dramatized—the gambling game from which it derives its Cratylan name is put to similar figurative use. Aleksei enlists the metaphorical charisma of the wheel in expounding one of his racial teleologies:

“Roulette is simply made for Russians [...] Into the catechism of virtues and qualities of civilized western man has entered—historically and almost as the principal determinant—the capacity to amass capital. And the Russian is not only incapable of amassing capital, but also exhausts it wantonly and for no good reason. Nonetheless, we Russians also need money [...] so we are very glad of and very keen on such methods as roulette, which offer the opportunity of getting rich suddenly, in two hours, without doing any work. This seduces us very much, but since we gamble to no purpose, without effort, we generally lose!”

—[[P]улетка только и создана для русских [...] В] катехизисе добродетелей и достоинств цивилизованного западного человека вошла исторически и чуть ли не в виде главного пункта способность приобретения капиталов. А русский не только не способен приобретать капиталы, но даже и расточает их как-то зря и безобразно. Тем не менее нам, русским, деньги тоже нужны [...] следовательно, мы очень рады и очень падки на такие способы, как например рулетки, где можно разбогатеть вдруг, в два часа, не трудясь. Это нас очень

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<sup>58</sup> Frank, *The Miraculous Years*, p. 181.

прельщает; а так как мы и играем зря, без труда, то и проигрываемся!—]

(223)

But the very fact that this ethno-psychological reading is offered by Aleksei, whose patriotism is of an exceptionally bilious kind, might make us inclined to distrust it. Aleksei's pronouncements on Russian (and German) national character, moreover, need to be seen in the context of a line of provocative performances, based around his perceptions of other people's expectations of him as a factotum and as a Russian, and designed to both impress Polina and scandalize watering-place society. Not content with threatening to throw himself from the Schlangenberg, Aleksei has already—at Polina's bidding and to prove himself a 'heretic and barbarian' ('eretik i varvar') (211)—insulted the fat wife of a German baron.

However much he argues to the contrary, the taxonomic logic of national determinism does not come naturally to Aleksei, who, as his Roulettenburg performances attest, is rather drawn to the unique act that explodes generalizable tendency. The clearest illustration of the gap between Aleksei's instincts and some of his rhetoric emerges in his conduct at the *Spielbank*. Like so many gamblers before him (and as we have seen), he devises a ratiocinated 'system' for roulette. But he abandons it almost at once. The policy of odds-defying chutzpah that governs Aleksei's betting in the second half of the novella can equally be construed as a vindication of his ideas about Russians and gambling and as a repudiation of the systematic logic upon which such ideas depend:

How ridiculous it is that I should expect so much for myself from roulette; but what seems to me even more ridiculous is the standard opinion, accepted by all, that it is stupid and absurd to expect anything of roulette. And why is gambling worse than any other method for getting hold of money—trade for example? It is true that only one in an hundred wins. But what difference does that make to me?

[Как это ни смешно, что я так много жду для себя от рулетки, но мне кажется, еще смешнее рутинное мнение, всеми

признанное, что глупо и нелепо ожидать чего-нибудь от игры. И почему игра хуже какого бы то ни было способа добывания денег, например, хоть торговли? Оно правда, что выигрывает из сотни один. Но -- какое мне до того дело?].

(216)

Aleksei deploys a similar argument—actually a refusal of argument—in support of his plan to throw himself from the Schlangenberg: ‘It makes no difference to me whether it is stupid or not’ (‘mne nikakogo dela net do togo, glupa li ona il’ net’) (231). His obsession with analytic knowledge—with ‘explanations’ (‘ob’iasneniia’, 214), knowing ‘what the matter is’ (‘v chem delo’, 227), with ‘seeing through’ (‘videt’ naskoz’, 231) people—masks (or betrays) an inclination to throw calculus and probability to the wind. Rational capitalism, national determinism—even the apparently commonsensical decision to play the odds—all eventually pale next to a seemingly irresistible teleology of daring.

*Pace* Frank, Aleksei’s spa notebooks are perhaps best read as a polyphonic (even if all the voices emanate from a single consciousness) meditation on contingency and the possibility—be it through systems or passionate faith—of escaping it. Dostoevskii’s Soviet-era biographer Iurii Seleznev—like his subject an outspoken nationalist—offers the game as a metaphor for—and a potential means to—chain-breaking self-realization:

[D]o not talk of greed. Greed has nothing to do with it [...] Here, at roulette—just think of it: one instant, and in one fell swoop, in one bold movement, you tear from fate that for which entire generations might have to give their lives [...] You need only to be decisive, to allow yourself to overcome the fear of risk [...] With millions one can do many things but the main thing is freedom: from the constant need to write to earn a crust of bread, from eternal dependence on creditors, on moneylenders, on employers; because to write for money is intolerable both physically and morally.

[[H]е говорите о корысти. Корысть здесь на последнем месте [...] Здесь, на рулетке, здесь, только представьте себе: мгновение – и вы одним махом, одним дерзким движением вырываете у судьбы то, на что тратят свои жизни порой целые

поколения. [...] Нужно только решиться, позволить себе переступить через страх риска [...] А с миллионами можно много сделать, и главное -- свобода: от постоянной нужды писать из-за куска хлеба, вечной зависимости от кредиторов, ростовщиков, работодателей, потому что писать из-за денег невыносимо и физически и нравственно.]<sup>59</sup>

Dostoevskii's gambling narrative offers some support to Seleznev's Nietzschean reading of the novelist's psychology. "[W]ith money", Aleksei tells Polina, "I'll be a different person, even for you, not a slave" ("[C] den'gami ia stanu i dlia vas drugim chelovekom, a ne rabom' (229). But, as with Frank, there is a risk here of interpretative overreliance upon self-understanding; *The Gambler's* insights into the psychology of servitude are in any event much less straightforward.

Aleksei has an ambivalent and eroticized obsession with enslavement. In a passage foreshadowing episodes from Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* (1870)—Sacher-Masoch's Severin has his dominatrix play the part of a serf-beating Catherine the Great—he imagines Polina an 'ancient empress' ('drevniaia imperatriza') undressing before him because she does not consider him a person (215); and scandalizes the German baroness with the words: 'Madame la baronne [...] j'ai l'honneur d'être votre esclave' (234).<sup>60</sup> His desire to escape the financially dependent and socially subservient position of tutor mirrors, as Seleznev suggests, Dostoevskii's despair at having to support himself as a professional writer—although, of course, gambling was a significant cause of Dostoevskii's financial pressures whereas Aleksei begins the novella poor, resentful but apparently viceless.

As convincingly as gambling can be constructed as a (cod-)Nietzschean tearing of freedom from fate, the practice can be read in terms of self-imposed servitude. Freud, in a 1928 essay on Dostoevskii that contains perhaps his most concise statement of the Oedipus complex (developed with reference to *The*

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<sup>59</sup> Seleznev, *Dostoevskii* (Moscow: Novator, 1997), p. 280.

<sup>60</sup> On Sacher-Masoch's links to Dostoevskii and the Grand Inquisitor-ish prospect of slavery as freedom, see Svetlana Boym, *Another Freedom: An Alternative History of An Idea* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 134-136.

*Brothers Karamazov* and the murder of Dostoevskii's own father), speculates that losing at play was, for Dostoevskii, a route to the masochistic expiation of Oedipal guilt:

[H]e never rested until he had lost everything. For him gambling was a method of self-punishment [...] Time after time he gave his young wife his promise or his word of honour not to play any more or not to play any more on that particular day; and, as she says, he almost always broke it. When his losses had reduced himself and her to the direst need, he derived a second pathological satisfaction from that. He could then scold and humiliate himself before her, invite her to despise him and to feel sorry that she had married such an old sinner; and when he had thus unburdened his conscience, the whole business would begin again next day.<sup>61</sup>

Freud does not refer to *The Gambler* in 'Dostoevskii and Parricide' (it is not clear, indeed, that he was aware of the novella). Yet his analysis is as relevant, *mutatis mutandi*, to Aleksei's compulsive ordeal at Roulettenburg as to the Dostoevskii's time at Baden-Baden. Indeed, the penitentiary desire to be 'reduced' and 'humiliated' by losing at the tables is easily linked, psychoanalytically, to Aleksei's fantasies of 'imperial' domination (that is, submission, in the part of a 'slave', to an 'empress') and by extension to his national chauvinism. (For Freud 'the father-relation'—that is, Oedipal guilt—is 'the decisive factor' in Dostoevskii's own 'attitude towards the authority of the State'; imperial 'fathers', we note with an eye to Queen Victoria and Sacher-Masoch's Catherine II fantasy, can sometimes be mothers.)

Seleznov and Freud's conflicting readings of Dostoevskian gaming practice represent two attempts to fathom a systematic logic that can account for the pathology of the gambler. Both direct their speculation toward scenes from the life of the author rather than Dostoevskii's fictional exegesis of the motives for play. In both cases, the search for order is a metasearch, narrating the subject's

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<sup>61</sup> 'Dostoevsky and Parricide', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1956-1974), 21, pp. 173-194, (p. 190).

attempts, ultimately vain, to reimpose an absent impression of control—whether of the Nietzschean or (masochistic-purgative) Freudian variety.

Somewhat paradoxically, it is in accounting for the decision either to subscribe to such deterministic systems or to renounce them that Joseph Frank's ethno-psychological reading of *The Gambler* comes into its own. Early in the novella, Aleksei—in provocative mode—asks which is the more offensive: 'Russian *bezobrazie* [a difficult-to-translate word connoting—variously—an outrage, something ugly and a kind of wilful stupidity] or the German capacity to amass capital by honest work?' ("russkoe [...] bezobrazie ili nemetskii sposob nakopleniia chestnym trudom"). De Grioux gently derides the remark as a 'Russian thought'; 'russkaia mysl'); General Zagorianskii, keen to distance himself from Aleksei, calls it a '*bezobraznaia* idea' ('bezobraznaia mysl'; 225). The association between Russianness and 'bezobrazie', whose etymologically 'literal' meaning in English is 'shapelessness' or 'formlessness' (*bez* = without; *obraz* = image/shape/form), recurs throughout the novella, with Aleksei unable or unwilling to control his gambling just as neither he nor the general can keep their ejaculations the right side of civil. By the end of the text, Aleksei's play at roulette is a paragon of shapelessness; he bets 'haphazardly, at random, without thought [...] almost without consciousness' ('na avos', zria, bez razscheta [...] pochti bez soznaniia'; 293).

Europeans think—and bet—differently. Aleksei cites the example of a Frenchwoman he has observed at the tables:

She [...] places her bets quietly, coolly, calculatingly, noting the numbers with a pencil on a sheet of paper and trying to discover the system according to which the chances grouped themselves at any given moment [...] Every day she has won a thousand, two thousand, at most three thousand francs and, having won, she immediately walks away.

[Она [...] ставит тихо, хладнокровно, с расчетом, отмечая на бумажке карандашом цифры и стараясь отыскать систему, по которой в данный момент группировались шансы [...] Выигрывала каждый день одну, две, много три тысячи франков — не более и, выиграв, тотчас же уходила.]

(262)

Russian *bezobrazie* wins much more—one hundred thousand florins—for Aleksei than French calculation (or German hard work) can aspire to. But a ludics of haphazard inspiration carries with it the risk of a total breakdown in sense—an eventuality that Dostoevskii's narrative links with verbal expression: 'You have run off at the mouth and lost your thread' ("Vy zaraportovalis' i poterial nitku"), Polina tells Aleksei at the height of his 'shapeless' eloquence (230). Such lack of restraint eventually leads Aleksei, riding high at roulette, to forget that winning at play was a means and not an end—and to forget Polina too. His *bezobrazie* (which not every Russian, and perhaps the westernized sort least of all, appreciates) keeps him and his love-object apart.

A figural mutuality thus suggests itself between gambling practice and the creative process. As Valery Podoroga has written in an essay on Dostoevskii's draft manuscripts, the writer's own notes closely resemble Aleksei's diary—and, more obliquely, evoke the latter's progress at Roulettenburg: 'The rough drafts and working notes provide a lively, moving surface, dotted with holes, blanks and gaps, with a multitude of ancillary comments, qualifications, cancellations ('crossings-out'), all competing with one another.'<sup>62</sup> Gaps (what are Mr. Astley's motives? what exactly happened between Polina and de Grioux?) and cancellations (e.g. Aleksei's move from a gambling 'system' to random play) in particular characterize *The Gambler*. As Podoroga continues, it was a sense of the need to formalize the experience of ramification and self-involution characteristic of consciousness that prompted Dostoevskii to take on Anna as a stenographer in the first place. Dictation offers a sense (at least) of 'formlessness' (we might say

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<sup>62</sup> Valery Podoroga, 'Dostoevsky's Plans', *New Left Review*, 84, (2013), 121-129 (p. 121).

*freeformness*) and liberation from contingency that sitting alone with pen and page cannot (though Podoroga seems to neglect the consideration that a degree of precision will always be necessary if the stenographer is to keep up):

With the writing stage eliminated or at least reduced to simple recording, the voice acquired an obvious ascendancy over writing itself. If there is no direct contact with the written, the field of possibilities for expression expands. A gap opens up between speech and hand, with speech acquiring such intensity and speed that there is no need for precision [...] writing is unable to intervene in this continuing verbal flow.<sup>63</sup>

*The Gambler* was the first work of fiction Dostoevskii dictated—and it shows. The ‘ascendancy’ of the voice over writing in the novella lays the scene for the great long novels that followed—for the evolution of Dostoevskian polyphony. Whether or not such a working method is peculiarly Russian is probably imponderable (though a link could easily be made with Gogolian or Zoshchenkoan oral performance or *skaz*). What Dostoevskii’s spa text communicates with more certainty is that de-systematization is an ambivalent recipe for creative and personal conquest. Faith in nationality, in beating the odds and in the moral permanence of classic narratives offer (admittedly compromised) relief from the (for certain minds) insuperable aesthetic and ethical problem of bewilderment; to embrace that bewilderment represents a courageous and mercurial step, but one highly likely to eventuate in alienation.

‘Too Polished Up’: Repression and Therapeutic Order in *The Good Soldier*

Besides spa settings and titles that both clash and chime—Ford’s ‘good soldier’ Edward Ashburnham is also a gambler, though since the *Spielbank* at Bad Nauheim was by the turn of the century only for concerts he has to go to Monte Carlo to do it—*The Gambler* and *The Good Soldier* share an interest in the epistemological trials of narrative. Both Aleksei Mikhailovich’s pursuit of final

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<sup>63</sup> Podoroga, p. 129.



reckonings at Roulettenburg and John Dowell's struggle to give a cogent account of the Bad Nauheim *ménage à quatre* in which he was a participant for almost a decade represent striking feats of modernist narrative mimesis, registering less baroquely but no less effectively than totemic works by Andrei Belyi, Joyce and Faulkner the efforts of consciousness to formulize and give form to a lived experience that necessarily overflows it.

Max Saunders has written of the 'transitionality' of Ford's fiction: its midway position between a—heuristically conceived—realist concern for the material conditions of consciousness and the modernist assault on the psyche itself ('[A]fter the [Cartesian] doubt about things, we [...] started to doubt consciousness' is Paul Ricoeur's gloss of the paradigmatic shift).<sup>64</sup> Such transitionality again ties Ford, though he might resent the imputation, to Dostoevskii.

'Consciousness is [Ford's] subject, rather than the objects of consciousness', writes Saunders; and the same might be said of *The Gambler*. Yet the presiding voices in both narratives live out their bafflement in Euclidean and social space. In *The Gambler*, questions of rank and status and strategy are the fuel upon which Aleksei's *ressentiment* and ingenuity run, while in *The Good Soldier*, the provisional satisfactions of material and procedural recall accommodate John Dowell's urgent need to narrate the events surrounding his wife's Florence's adultery and death without confronting the agony either of full disclosure or its impossibility.<sup>65</sup>

Like Dostoevskii's Aleksei Mikhailovich, Dowell (who as an American at sea amid European social and sexual punctilios is a profoundly Jamesian creation) finds himself beset by the difficulty of accounting, procedurally and ethically, for a lengthy and involuted *Kurort* ordeal. But while Aleksei's Roulettenburg neurosis, unfolding in diaristic 'real-time', nourishes itself upon secrets suspected and the tantalizing prospect of disclosure, Ford's novel, narrated with hindsight,

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<sup>64</sup> Max Saunders, 'Modernism, Impressionism and Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*', *Études anglaises*, 57, (2004), p. 421-437 (p. 423); Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay in Interpretation*, trans. by Denis Savage (London: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 33.

<sup>65</sup> Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 5.

takes the less breathless form of an inquest, by turns melancholic and angry, into the nine summer seasons Dowell spent with Florence and their English friends the Ashburnhams at the Hesse resort of Bad Nauheim.

John Dowell's drama has ostensibly concluded by the time he begins recounting it. Yet he is burdened by a sense of responsibility to chronicle 'the saddest story I have ever heard'—he often speaks from the position of an observer rather than a participant—and by the question of which kind of telling offers the best chance for the truth to emerge: 'I don't know how it is best to put this thing down—whether it would be better to try and tell the story from the beginning, as if it were a story; or whether to tell it from this distance of time [...]'.<sup>66</sup>

The 'or' in the last sentence is a somewhat fallacious one—and such binary misprisions, apparently born of the pursuit of clarity but only muddying matters further, are characteristic of Dowell's chronicle. Yet we appreciate his point. Distance and proximity, chronological accuracy and immediacy: talking about storytelling can very easily mean giving credit to false oppositions. The diary, for example, can seem to promise a phenomenology of experience, a platter of vivid presence that measured retrospection would, to the detriment of truth, censor or clean up. But Aleksei Mikhailovich's journal keeping, as we have seen, is a prime motor of his delusions. By a similar token, it was a tenet of Ford's literary Impressionism never to render a long speech lest the reader think 'Hullo, this fellow is faking it'. Yet as Dowell's account of Florence's adultery and death attests, participation in a situation by no means always renders that situation easy to comprehend or to relate.<sup>67</sup> Below I suggest that where Dostoevskii and Aleksei Mikhailovich make gambling a figural proxy for the latter's pursuit of clarifying formulae, bewilderment about the whys and wherefores of intersubjective relationships engenders in Ford's narrator a near-mania for the epistemological surrogate of empirical detail.

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<sup>66</sup> Ford Madox Ford *The Good Soldier*, ed. by Martin Stannard (London: Norton, 2012), p. 15. Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>67</sup>Cited in Saunders, 'Ford and Impressionism' in *Ford Madox Ford: Literary Networks and Cultural Transmissions*, ed. by Andrzej Gasiorek and Daniel Moore (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008, pp. 151-165 (p. 153).

Therapeutically and atmospherically—down to its Jugendstil architecture—Ford’s Bad Nauheim seems a world away from Thackeray’s ‘gay, wicked’ Rougetnoirbourg. Bathing rituals are explicitly invoked in Ford’s novel, as are the rest regimens and ‘Swedish exercises’ (12) that, by the turn of the twentieth century, rounded off a medically directed *Kur*. Healthful excursions to sites of historical interest supplement the itinerary and Dowell carries with him from Nauheim a recollection of the superintendent gaze of bathing attendants ‘with their cheerful faces, their air of authority, their white linen’ (21). As Petra Rau has written, Ford’s spa is—or at least appears to be—‘a modern nexus of exchange: modern treatments for old illnesses, modern “conditions” rather than laborious deceptions’.<sup>68</sup> Far from reporting an atmosphere of duality and transgression, John Dowell recalls, again paradoxically, feeling both overexposed and hemmed in:

[T]o be at Nauheim gave me a sense—what shall I say?—a sense almost of nakedness—the nakedness that one feels on the sea-shore or in any great open space. [...] And one is too polished up. Heaven knows I was never an untidy man. But the feeling that I had when, whilst poor Florence was taking her morning bath, I stood upon the carefully swept steps of the Englischer Hof, looking at the carefully arranged trees in tubs upon the carefully arranged gravel whilst carefully arranged people walked past in carefully calculated gaiety, at the carefully calculated hour, the tall trees of the public gardens, going up to the right; the reddish stone of the baths—or were they white half-timber châteaux? Upon my word I have forgotten, I who was there so often.

(22)

As so often in *The Good Soldier*, the above resumé of feeling tails off into unresolved material and procedural speculation. ‘Consciousness’ and ‘things’—opposed in Ricoeur’s précis of modernist perplexity—are mutually implicated in Ford’s narrative. In the above account and several others like it, the attempt to

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<sup>68</sup> Rau, *English Modernism*, p. 99.

recall with detailed precision the dimensions and characteristics of a space that produced agoraphobic discomfort in Dowell when he was in Nauheim serves as both a relief from and a compensation for the inscrutability of other species of knowledge.

John and Florence Dowell visited Nauheim, a centre for the treatment-by-water of cardiac complaints, every summer for nine years in the company of their friends Edward and Leonora Ashburnham. For Florence in particular the cure was important: she 'had a heart' that could carry her off at any moment. This fearful prospect goes someway toward explaining both John Dowell's recollection of being on tenterhooks and the careful austerity of the therapeutic setting:

[T]he palm tree in the centre of the room; the swish of the waiter's feet; the cold expensive elegance; the mien of the diners as they came in every evening—their air of earnestness as if they must go through a meal prescribed by the Kur authorities and their air of sobriety as if they must seek not by any means to enjoy their meals [...]

(23-24)

Yet beneath the atmosphere of prescription, Nauheim is a nest of latent drives. In this sense Ford's watering place, or rather John Dowell's narration of it, bears traces of the nineteenth-century's divulgent, ethically binarizing spa text. Respected Hampshire magistrate Teddy Ashburnham, for all the world 'the sort of person you could trust your wife alone with', is a Leverian (see Chapter 5) exiled defaulter and 'a raging stallion forever neighing after his neighbour's womankind' (14-15). August, fragile Florence Dowell is 'vulgar' and a 'common flirt' (125)—a descendant, indeed, of the meretricious women (Becky Sharp, Dostoevskii's Mlle. Blanche and Turgenev's Mme. Polozova) who throng the nineteenth century's watering-place text. '[S]edulous' (12), perturbed John Dowell has the 'hatred of the adder' inside him (55).

Such is the *The Good Soldier's* commitment to aporia, however, that even such revelations and cancellations are offered only provisionally. Ford's narrator is painfully aware he has 'told the story in a very rambling way' (124), that he

‘may have given [...] a false impression’ (125). Indeed, the closest Dowell comes in the narrative to an abstract scheme of conviction is with the idea that the surface of a situation cannot accurately reflect its interiority: ‘[T]he chastity of his expressions [...] they say that is always the hall-mark of a libertine’ (14-15); ‘To be the county family, to look the county family [...] To have all that and to be all that! No, it was too good to be true [...]’ (13).

Pragmatic, embodied and empirical knowledge of an apparently dependable material world (‘I could find my way blindfolded to the hot rooms, to the douche rooms, to the fountain in the centre of the quadrangle where the rusty water gushes out [...] I know the exact distances [...]’; 22) is a settling substitute for a far more elusive understanding of human conduct and relations. Visual recall in particular serves an important function in a chronicle of events that Dowell frames successively (and paradoxically) as a civic-minded testament and the means to an abreaction (‘You may well ask why I write [...] It is not unusual in human beings who have witnessed the sack of a city or the falling to pieces of a people to desire to set down what they have witnessed for the benefit of unknown heirs or of generations infinitely remote; or, if you please, just to get the sight out of their heads.’; 11) In a passage that encapsulates *The Good Soldier*’s fluid and associative epistemological economy, he recounts, with a circumlocution verging on mystification, his role as accessory to Florence’s ‘cure’:

I would walk with Florence to the baths [...] Her hair was very nicely done, and she dressed beautifully and very expensively. Of course, she had money of her own but I shouldn’t have minded. And yet you know I can’t remember a single one of her dresses. Or I can remember just one, a very simple one of blue figured silk—a Chinese pattern—very full in the skirts and broadening out over the shoulders. And her hair was copper-coloured, and the heels of her shoes were exceedingly high, so that she tripped upon the points of her toes. And when she came to the door of the bathing place, and when it opened to receive her, she would look back at me with a little coquettish smile, so that her cheek appeared to be caressing her shoulder. [...] Yes, that is how I most exactly remember her, in that dress, in that hat, looking over her shoulder at me so that the eyes flashed very blue—dark pebble blue...And, what the devil! For whose benefit did she do it? For that of the bath attendant? of the passers-by? I don’t know. Anyhow, it can’t have been for me, for

never, in all the years of her life, never on any possible occasion, or in any other place did she so smile to me, mockingly, invitingly. Ah, she was a riddle [...]

(22-23)

The only outfit of Florence's John Dowell can remember—and he remembers it with extraordinary precision—juxtaposes itself in memory with a recurring scene of psychosexual cruelty: the daily smile that betrayed without revealing that Florence's cure was a sham designed to facilitate an affair with Edward Ashburnham. In the jarring transitions between dotting visual recollection, angry confoundment ('What the devil?') and a kind of senescent wistfulness ('Ah, she was a riddle!') that give form to the above extract, we can discover a key to the narrative as a whole; Dowell's harrowed attempts to 'put this thing down' ultimately reads like a bewitched tapestry of deferral and repression, straining toward its own unpicking.

No intuitive opposition, it can feel at times, escapes disruption in *The Good Soldier*. The gridding and 'polishing up' that defines the socio-therapeutic atmosphere of Bad Nauheim emerges as an accomplice of wanton conduct (it is John Dowell's obedience to a 'medical' injunction mandating locked bedroom doors that facilitate Florence and Edward's long Nauheim affair). Narrative memory—the exacting reconstruction of physical attributes, the committing to mind of 'exact distances'—facilitates narrative forgetfulness, just as during the course of their marriage busy solicitude for his wife's 'illness' had helped Dowell avoid the evidence of his eyes; and unspoken confession ('that little coquettish smile') was for Florence herself a means of hiding her betrayal in plain sight.

If modernity as a cultural condition implies not so much the collapse of binaries as their perplexing concurrency, then Ford's Nauheim, which as Rau notes collocates 'the desiring and ailing body, sex and death', is a very modern cure resort, testifying to the capacity of *p* to equal *p* and non-*p* at once. And Florence Dowell is a very modern subject—'so familiar with [the resort's] balneotherapeutic rituals and social conventions that they can provide both the

stage and the paravent for her sex life'.<sup>69</sup> John Dowell, by contrast—and as Rau recognises—is a relic, unable to grasp that successful performances rather than compelling truths are the order of the day ('Permanence? Stability? I can't believe it's gone' (11), reflects Dowell, apparently lamenting the end of the Dowells and Ashburnhams' friendship, but also echoing Ford's own sense, given voice in *The Soul of London* (1905) and linked to the demands placed upon consciousness by urban existence, of living in a time in which '[c]onnected thinking [had] become nearly impossible').<sup>70</sup>

Resort culture's capacity to accommodate inbetweenness may have played a part in Ford and Violet Hunt's apparent decision to visit a succession of spas (not only Nauheim but also Homburg and Bad Schwalbach) in the months that separated the beginning of the couple's affair and their quasi-marriage in 1911. Less speculative is the suggestion that Nauheim functions as a kind of *literal* middle term in the *figural* spatial economy of *The Good Soldier*. Dowell at first describes the Dowells and the Ashburnhams' watering-place intimacy as a 'minuet' ('simply because on every possible occasion and in every possible circumstance we knew where to go, where to sit, which table we unanimously should choose; and we could rise and go, all four together, without a signal from any one of us, always to the music of the Kur orchestra, always in the temperate sunshine, or, if it rained, in discreet shelters'; 11) But, like Aleksei shredding his roulette playbook, he quickly cancels this invocation of the rule-governed, self-consistent artifice of the dancefloor in favour of a very different equivalence: 'No, by God, it is false! It wasn't a minuet that we stepped; it was a prison—a prison full of screaming hysterics, tied down so they might not outsound the rolling of our carriage as we went along the shaded avenues of the Taunus Wald.' (12) Where remembrance (as so often in the case of love betrayed) can muster such irreconcilable figures, a kind of affective greyness, abetted by self-confinement to the phenomenal plane, emerges as an intuitive solvent (although it solves nothing at all). Active collusion in his own cuckolding ultimately 'feels'—and Dowell's eschatological phrasing, bereaved of orientative bearing, matches his 'what the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>70</sup> *The Soul of London* (London: Alston Rivers, 1905), p. 134.

devil!’—‘just [like] nothing at all. It is not Hell, certainly it is not necessarily Heaven. So I suppose it is the intermediate stage’ (54). For Ford the ‘transitional’ novelist, the spa is a convenient ‘transitional’ space, halfway between performance venue and closed ward; as such it is an apt locus in and through which to register the limbo-like sense of being caught between binaries.

## Conclusions

The first half of this chapter described the broad tendency of mid-century print culture to read the Continental spa in residually (‘skeuomorphically’) allegorical terms, with religiously inscribed dualisms continuing to condition the inscription of feeling about modern social forms such as casino gambling. The second half, barely rippling the surface of Dostoevskii and Ford’s great narratives of myopia, showed how, in their different ways, *The Gambler* and *The Good Soldier* hitch the venerable motif of spa conspiracy to a modernist exposition of both the insufficiency and charismatic pull of dualistic formulae. The speculative tonalities of the tables of Roulettenburg and the hygienic spaces and rhythms of Ford’s Bad Nauheim represent different interpretative extremes of the syncretic construct ‘spa culture’, but both offer themselves as Balzacian daemonic crutches in the context of an orientative narrative attunement.

Modern bafflement, a tetchy descendant of wonder, does not throw itself happily upon contingency or find in expressive frustration the stimulant spirit of the Socratic method or Christian mystagogy, but rather explores, compulsively, avenues of escape. Both *The Gambler* and *The Good Soldier* thus describe the perdition of the subject for whom the problem is not so much that no sound authorities in the sphere of experience or feeling recommend themselves as that the answers (versions, renderings) never stop coming. It is for reasons of hermeneutic surfeit rather than dearth that Dostoevskii’s Aleksei Ivanovich and Ford’s John Dowell stand before the events of the present and the past rather as, in *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard’s alter ego Anti-Climacus stands alone before God: radically divested of both certainty and consolation.



## Chapter 4:

### ‘The Often-Described Scene’: Mediation and Watering-Place Experience

Des salles silencieuses où les pas de celui qui s'avance sont absorbés par des tapis si beaux, si épais, qu'aucun bruit de pas ne parvient à sa propre oreille. Comme si l'oreille, elle-même, de celui qui s'avance, une fois de plus, le long de ce couloir, à travers ces salons, ces galeries, dans cette construction d'un autre siècle...<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'The silent halls where the steps of he who advances are absorbed by carpets so beautiful, so thick, that no noise of footsteps reaches his ear. It is as if the ear itself of him who is advancing, once again, along this corridor, through these salons, these galleries, in this construction from another century...' The opening lines, tailing off into echo, of *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, dir. by Alain Resnais, scr. by Alain Robbe-Grillet (Cocinor, 1961) [DVD].

‘The often-described scene at the Kursaal [at Bad Homburg] displayed all the customary features’, remarks Edward Yates’s narrator in *Black Sheep* (1867) before naming them anyway.<sup>2</sup> Dostoevskii’s Aleksei Ivanovich has read ‘a thousand descriptions of roulette’ (‘tysiachu opisaniï ruletki’, *I*, 216) before he ever places a bet. George Eliot’s Gwendolen Harleth has ‘heard stories at Leubronn of fashionable women who gambled in all sorts of ways’, while Charles Lever’s Arthur O’ Leary maintains that ‘to understand [Continental resorts] properly, you must begin by forgetting all you have been so studiously storing up as fact from the books of [Francis Bond] Head, [Augustus Bozzi] Granville and others’.<sup>3</sup>

Reading across fiction and other popular forms from 1840 we find, in a characteristic double movement, print culture establishing and, often in the same breath, registering and reflecting upon the Continental spa’s status as a topic in discourse. Nor is this sense of watering places as always-already familiar cultural quantities confined to the nineteenth century. Hermann Hesse’s first trip to Baden bei Zürich in 1923, mobilizing textually implanted memory in the manner of the psychoanalytic *après-coup*, seems hardly a first at all:

I had seen this often years before [...] I had seen those palms and upholstered seats, those green tables and balls, and then I had thought of the handsome flushed gamblers’ faces of Turgenev and Dostoevsky [...]

[Oft hatte ich dies schon gesehen, in früheren Jahren [...]H]atte ich diese Palmen und Polster, diese selben grünen Tische und Kugeln gesehen und dabei an die schönen schwülen Spielergeschichten von Turgenev und Dostojewski [...]<sup>4</sup>

This chapter considers writing about resorts as both the subject and self-conscious object of an escalating and sometimes disorientating culture of hypermediation. I

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<sup>2</sup> *Black Sheep*, 2, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> *Daniel Deronda*, 3, p. 54. Lever, *Arthur O’ Leary*, 3, p. 69. Sir Francis Bond Head’s *Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassau* was a highly popular account of a cure at the German spa of Langen-Schwalbach.

<sup>4</sup> Hesse, *Kurgast: Aufzeichnungen von einer Badener Kur* (1949) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2012), p. 55. Translated as ‘A Guest at the Spa’ in *Six Novels with Other Stories and Essays*, ed. and intro. by Bernard Levin. (London: William Collins and Sons. 1980), p. 448.

first register the ‘headlong popularity’—the term is Arthur O’ Leary’s—of the travel guide book, pioneered in its modern compositional format by the famous London publishing firm of John Murray and a major source of knowledge about watering places from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> I suggest the imaginative penetration of Murray’s guides, whose didactic authority derived from their presentation as a unifying empirical intelligence but whose relations to the places whose identity they helped broker can equally be construed as plural and distantiated, as symbolic of the attainment of second-order images—copies of copies—to an unprecedented degree of influence over how readers and writers experienced and narrated the world.

Finally I describe a diffuse tradition of spa metafiction (stretching from Charles Lever and Thackeray to late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century novels by Bruce Chatwin, Leonid Tsypkin and W.G. Sebald which, recognizing the perlocutionary charisma of the nineteenth-century’s watering-place text, puts problems of mediation and experience at the centre of its autocritique of the topographic imagination.

The chapter as a whole bears the imprint of what might be called a tempered Baudrillardian epistemology. I stop well short of the totalizing drift of Baudrillard’s theory of the collapse of referentiality under the assault of simulacra, but draw on his sense, itself owing much to Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (1936), of image saturation and serial reproduction as social factors increasingly conditioning expression and experience—and of industrial capitalism as the cradle of a culture of representation definable in terms of ‘models [...] proceed[ing] from models’.<sup>6</sup>

‘None the less impressive because they are vague’: A Point on Method

The reasonable wish to conceptualize the relations between texts in terms that would be appreciated by the authors who enacted them can make some of the

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<sup>5</sup> *Arthur O’ Leary*, 1, p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> See Baudrillard, ‘Symbolic Exchange and Death’, *passim* but esp. p 178.

introduction to this chapter read as somewhat suspect. Would not Baudrillardian talk of ‘hypermediation’—even this thesis’s attention to a watering-place ‘text’ that is not a named work—be better suited to the study of writing from or at least displaying an evident drift toward a poststructuralist cosmos? The idea of a diffuse (trans-)cultural text, moreover, must meet (a) the problem of the limited investigability of its premises and (b) the related temptation to refer shared conceptions and expression either straightforwardly to the object of representation (‘motif xyz predominates because *that is what watering places were like*’) or to the inescapable generality of language itself.

According to such logic, the study of nineteenth-century print culture—perhaps all literary study—invites us to prioritize what most preoccupied nineteenth-century literary scholars in the historicist mould: the tracing of linear relations of *influence*—that is, in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein’s terms, ‘dyads of transmission from one unity (author, work, tradition) to another.’<sup>7</sup>

Yet the fortuitous and intangible nature of many literary transmissions—which makes ‘intertextuality’, despite some unhelpfully jargonistic baggage, a handier catch-all term than ‘influence’ in mapping a spectrum running from direct quotation to faint dictional echo—was by no means a twentieth-century discovery. Here is Emerson in an 1859 essay called ‘Quotation and Originality’:

Our debt to tradition through reading and conversation is so massive, our protest and private addition so rare and insignificant—and that commonly on the ground of other reading or hearing—that, in a large sense, we would say there is no pure originality. All minds quote. Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment. There is no thread that is not a twist of these two strands. By necessity, by proclivity, and by delight, we all quote.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, ‘Figures in the Corpus: Theories of Influence and Intertextuality’ in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, ed. by Clayton and Rothstein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 3-36 (p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> Emerson, *The Collected Works of Ralph Emerson*, 10 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 8, pp. 93-107 (p. 94).

Emerson's cardinal terms here—'tradition', 'quot[ation]'—appear to mark an agency-centric conception of creativity and its sources. But his invocation of 'protest', 'proclivity' and 'necessity'—and the image of twisted strands—brings out a sense of literary activity as equally conditioned by the author's social situatedness—and the unconscious and fortuitous discursive impingements that come with it. (Meanwhile, the credit Emerson gives to oral as well as textual sources raises an important point about discursive transmissions as far as the nineteenth-century's watering-place text is concerned: anecdotes, idiom and song—'Venez ici, sans souci. Vous/Partirez d'ici, sans six-sous!' is a line from one ditty about Baden-Baden that was written down—were arguably as important in establishing the spa's discursive identity as narratives in print.<sup>9</sup> The impact of such ephemera is, however, devilishly hard to trace.)

Nineteenth-century writing is not only alive to how writing minds 'quote' whether they choose to or not, but also flags up, rather less abstractly than some twentieth-century theory, the consequences for 'non-discursive' experience of the effective uncircumventability of other people's ideas and modes of expression. Where Bakhtin, in 'Discourse in the Novel', meditates on the fate of 'the word'—its 'spectral dispersion in an atmosphere filled with the alien words, value judgments and accents through which the ray passes on its way toward the object'—James, in the 'London' essay (1888), stresses the human factor, describing how the sight of the granite portico of Exeter Hall, a venue on the Strand in which Britain's anti-slavery movement had once held its meetings

evokes a cloud of impressions which are none the less impressive because they are vague; coming from I don't know where—from *Punch*, from Thackeray, from old volumes of the *Illustrated London News* turned over in childhood; seeming connected with Mrs. Beecher Stowe and "Uncle Tom's Cabin".<sup>10</sup>

Both James's and Bakhtin's phrasing is, significantly, ethereal: nineteenth- and (abstract-theoretical) twentieth-century accounts of literary relations coincide

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<sup>9</sup> Unsigned, 'Some Baden-Baden Translations'. *Littell's Living Age*, 19 December 1857. p. 722.

<sup>10</sup> Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 277; James, 'London', in *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America* (New York: Library of America, 1993), pp. 13-46 (pp. 17-18).

more than is sometimes acknowledged in conceptualizing mediation as something in the air and in crediting the part of discourse, manifesting as a kind of impressionistic quasi-totality, in the making of experience.

#### ‘It is Well Known...’: The Poetics of the Guide Book

‘[I]t is well known, that if you [...] take away the gaming tables [of Baden-Baden], you take away [...] the attraction’, writes Charles Francis Coghlan in *The Beauties of Baden-Baden*, one of hundreds of works from the 1850s that charge themselves with easing the English traveller into acquaintanceship with Europe’s premier resorts.<sup>11</sup>

Texts make the world knowable, recognizable, hospitable; as much as cartographic maps they are a principal resource by the aid of which we do not wander wild space. But print cultures, in addition to their instrumental function, foster and reflect modes of perception and expression. The forthright (pseudo-) objectivism of Coghlan’s account is characteristic of the guide book form (though the fact that the future actor and playwright was barely sixteen when his book was published—by his father—may be of significance too), but also of the broader consensualizing drift of realist representational procedure.

Whether reflective or creative or both, such judgments stuck fast. ‘[U]tilitarian language [...] the language I use to express my design, my desire, my command, my opinion; this language, when it has served its purpose, evaporates almost as it is heard’, wrote Paul Valéry in an 1938 essay.<sup>12</sup> But, if further evidence of the problematic nature of early twentieth-century formalist (Russian Formalist, Prague School) and avant garde (Valéry, Rilke) justifications for the separation of aesthetic from utilitarian discourse were needed, the endurance and breadth of diffusion of the ideas about Continental resorts propagated in texts like *The Beauties of Baden-Baden* (and above all in *Murray’s Handbook*) perhaps provides it. The predominance of gambling at watering places, the general sense

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<sup>11</sup> Coghlan, *The Beauties of Baden-Baden*, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Valéry, ‘Poetry and Abstract Thought’, Cited in Mary Louise Pratt, *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, (London: Indiana University Press, 1977), xvii.

of a spree: the Baden-Baden or Homburg sections of mid-century guides can read like distillations of the wider cultural stock of truisms about spa culture. 'I cannot conceive of anything more frightful', declares Lever's Arthur O' Leary, tongue in cheek but with a serious point lurking, 'than the sudden appearance of a work that should contradict everything in the 'Hand-book' and convince English people that John Murray was wrong'.<sup>13</sup>

The nineteenth-century guide book was thus an ambivalent object—in William W. Stowe's terms, 'at once the most practical and magical of texts'.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand the form is justifiably associated with the democratization of travel. Decentering the authorial subject (there is no 'I' in *Murray's Handbooks*, though, as in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, a 'we' sometimes intercedes) and appearing in this sense at least to dispense with the single, ideologically locatable narratorial voice characteristic both of much of the period's fiction (and that fiction's formal cousin the travel memoir), it might even be construed as, in Barthes' terms from 'The Death of the Author', an exceptionally anti-'theological' compositional mode.<sup>15</sup> The guide book's modular, sectional construction and mixing of 'high' and 'low' cultural parts (in Murray's guides to the Rhine, table d'hôte menus and railway timetables jostle quotations from Southey and Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*) make it an unlikely forerunner of both the modernist collage and the postmodern pastiche. There is even something leniently utopian about how guide books direct themselves toward the pleasure-seeking possibilities of the reader rather than recounting the travails of the author.

But the poetics of the nineteenth-century guide book are also compressive, taxonomic and overwhelmingly commercial (the number of advertisements carried by Murray's *Handbooks* roughly doubled between the 1830s and the 1870s). In this sense the form, whose factoidal mode of presentation seems designed to facilitate both skimming and rote-learning, helps mark travel's bathetic mutation into tourism. Medium is strictly subordinated to message in

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<sup>13</sup> *Arthur O' Leary*, 1, p. 87.

<sup>14</sup> William W. Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1982), pp. 142-148 (p. 146).



most travel guides: the names of ‘major’ destinations are capitalized, italicized or inset to mark them out from lesser loci; abbreviations (e.g. ‘Perm. Inhab.’ for ‘permanent inhabitants’) abound. *Murray’s Handbooks* popularized the awarding of star ratings (usually out of five, though since low-ranking establishments typically did not feature, venues could be effectively written out of existence). Terse formulations (‘WHAT TO SEE’) and tables of comparative data on currencies and distances round off the key characteristics of an often ruthlessly schematic narrative mode.

The guide book (the Russian term, *putevoditel’*, means route leader; the German, *Reiseführer*, is more commanding still) is also a gently authoritarian format. (The expression ‘traveller’s bible’, apparently not used in the nineteenth century but aptly applied to the form’s twentieth- and twenty-first-century descendants, hardly speaks to the guide book as an ‘anti-theological’ form.) Expressly conceived—see below—to furnish instrumental positive knowledge of the world, Murray’s guides in particular implicitly reject the Keatsian intellectual challenge of ‘negative capability’—of ‘being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts’—and rarely beat about the epistemological bush.<sup>16</sup>

The 1845 edition of *Murray’s Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* (whose title page announces a special interest in ‘[Europe’s] most frequented baths and watering places’) announces its mission in remedial terms. The editors wish to correct the ‘imperfect and erroneous’ accounts of Abroad dispensed by previous writer-travelers (Mariana Starke being the big name in the field), but hope at the same time to avoid ‘overwhelming their readers with minute details’.<sup>17</sup> Exhaustiveness in broad strokes is the Murray’s recipe, with the whole leavened by some light homiletics: ‘[t]he writer [...] has endeavoured to confine himself to matter-of-fact descriptions of what ought to be seen at each place.’ Note the discomfiture of the last clause, which conflates datum (‘matter-of-fact’) and ethical prescription (‘ought to be seen’). In a mid-nineteenth-century context, the guide book forms part of a medley of discursive mechanisms working, in Foucault’s terms

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<sup>16</sup>See Keats, ‘Letter to George and Thomas Keats’, in *Complete Works*, 5 vols, ed. H. Buxton Forman. (New York: AMS Press. 1970), 4, p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> *Murray’s Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* (1845), iii-iv.

from *The Order of Things* (*Les mots et les choses*, 1966), to ‘tame the wild profusion’ of unclassified, unhierarchized experience and recalibrating in the process cultural conceptions of the empirical and the ideal.<sup>18</sup>

Measuring, categorizing, highlighting and summing up: such was the repertory of evaluative and synoptic mechanisms referred to by Carl Benson in the *Galaxy* article cited in my Introduction as ‘the regular guide-book business’.<sup>19</sup> In its dedication to the mapping and schematization of Yi-Fu Tuan’s ‘unperceived field’ (see Chapter 1), the guide book bears a more than passing resemblance to the realist novel; in the lengths to which it goes in this respect it can verge on Dowellian monomania (the 1887 edition of *Appleton’s European Guide Book* volunteers the information that ‘the space between the floor and bottom of the lower berth’ on the express trains that run between Paris and the Rhine ‘is generally about 15 inches’).<sup>20</sup> But for all the counting, the judgements rendered are frequently arbitrary-seeming ones. Murray’s earliest guides insist, without explaining why, that ‘the best colour [of travelling blouse] is brown’ (we can surmise that the reason here is that such apparel will not show grime).<sup>21</sup> A Cook’s Guide from 1891 makes the (unsubstantiated) recommendation that ‘churches should be visited in the morning.’<sup>22</sup> The Russian journalist P.P. Kuzminskii’s *Courier: A Practical Guide for Russians to the Cities and Resorts of Western Europe and Egypt* (*Kur’er: prakticheskii putevoditel’ dlia russkikh po gorodam i kurortam zapadnoi Evropy i po Egiptu*) exhorts its train-travelling readers—regardless of their personal habits—to ‘try to find a place in the non-smoking compartments’ (*starat’sia voobshche zanimat’ mesta v otdeleniakh dlia nekuriashchikh*).<sup>23</sup> Kuzminskii put his own name to his advice; but for the most part, the readers of guide books took what could be a fairly oracular breed of

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<sup>18</sup> See Foucault, ‘Foreword to the English Edition’ in *The Order of Things*, (London: Routledge, 2002), xvi.

<sup>19</sup> Benson, ‘Baden-Baden’, p. 521.

<sup>20</sup> *Appleton’s European Guide Book*, (New York: Daniel Appleton. 1887), vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> *Murray’s Handbook* (1845), p. 486.

<sup>22</sup> *Cook’s Tourist Handbook for Holland, Belgium, the Rhine and the Black Forest* (London: Thomas Cook & Son. 1891), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Kuzminskii, *Kur’er: prakticheskii putevoditel’ dlia russkikh po gorodam i kurortam zapadnoi Evropy i po Egiptu* (St. Petersburg: A.S. Suvorin, 1909), viii.

instruction from a disembodied voice. (The bibliography to this thesis contains many iterations, mostly recording articles from newspapers and journals, of the (non-)attribution ‘Unsigned’; but among the most powerful anonymous discursive presences of the period 1840-1900 were arguably the authors of Murray’s, Baedeker’s and Appleton’s guides.)

Even glossing over the question of commercially motivated prejudice (Karl E. Wood has claimed that many of the guides published about individual Continental resorts were ‘transparently biased’), the *vox dei* tonalities of guide books in the John Murray mould mask the uneasiness of the foundations of some of their truth claims and recommendations.<sup>24</sup> In the case of Baden-Baden at mid-century, *Murray’s Handbooks’* categorical exegetics of place is, as I will now suggest, considerably undermined by the apparent incapacity of the franchise adequately to represent change over time.

#### ‘A Personal Knowledge....’: The Anachronistic Case of Murray’s Guides to Baden-Baden

The 1845 edition of *Murray’s Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* summarizes the impact on Baden-Baden of the resort’s recent popularity: ‘[t]he influx and concourse of visitors has greatly increased of late, and, in consequence, the number of new inns and other buildings has multiplied proportionately, but the place is falling off in respect of society’.<sup>25</sup> Aside from the light but predictable irony of a popularizing organ laying stress on the inverse relationship of popularity and esteem, there is nothing too remarkable here. Increased profit implies increased investment—and elites tend to baulk at the prospect of *recherché* venues going vulgar.

More striking is that the same information is reproduced almost verbatim in the 1870 edition of *Murray’s Handbook*: ‘[t]he influx and concourse of visitors has greatly increased of late, and, in consequence, the number of new inns and

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<sup>24</sup> Wood, ‘Spa Culture’, pp. 69-70.

<sup>25</sup> *Murray’s Handbook*, 1845 p. 548.

other buildings has multiplied proportionately.’<sup>26</sup> Facts may be stubborn things, but the period 1845-1870 was one of unprecedented change as far as the social and physical landscape of Baden-Baden was concerned. The 1870 *Handbook* appears to reflect this change but does not. (We could, of course, attribute the continuity between the two editions not to sloppy copyediting but to the wit of the publisher in recognizing the continuing applicability—change being a constant—of the original statement. But those readers of the 1870s who turned to Murray’s guides expecting the term ‘of late’ not to refer to the 1840s or earlier might be forgiven for not appreciating the joke.) In omitting the (certainly perlocutionary) contention that ‘[Baden-Baden] is falling off in respect of society’ but otherwise leaving its 1845 description of the spa intact, *Murray’s* 1870 guide brings to light a problem common to all non-fiction formats (not only guide books, but dictionaries and encyclopaedias too) that operate according to principles of collective authorship and regularly produce new editions. Where a temporally receding master text is revised only insofar as to eliminate obvious errors or infelicities (in the case of the clause on ‘respect of society’ we can speculate that, given the growth of middle-class tourism between 1845 and 1870, *Murray’s* no longer thought it politic to disparage Baden-Baden’s popularity), creeping anachronism is something of an inevitability.

*Murray’s* 1845 and 1870 *Handbooks* offer a more egregiously misleading united front in their sections on gambling at the Black Forest resort. Both the 1845 and 1870 editions state that ‘[gaming at Baden-Baden] is under the direction of M. Bénazet, who formerly farmed the gambling houses of Paris’.<sup>27</sup> But by 1870 Jacques Bénazet—who moved his casino from Paris to Baden-Baden in the 1830s—and his son Édouard, who continued the establishment, had been dead for twenty-two and three years respectively.<sup>28</sup> Widening the scope of our comparison, we find that many formulations from *Murray’s* first, 1836 *Handbook* survive as late as 1873 editions of the guide. Whatever other changes the *bouleversements* of

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<sup>26</sup> *Murray’s Handbook* (1870), p. 572.

<sup>27</sup> *Murray’s Handbook* (1845), p. 551; *Murray’s Handbook* (1870), p. 573.

<sup>28</sup> The editors had the tact to remove after that lady’s decease the titillating claim that the ‘Dowager Grand Duchess Stephanie has her apartments in the Neue Schloss’. *Murray’s Handbook* (1845) p. 548.

1848 and the industrial cataclysms of mid-century might have wrought in Europe, 'soap is [still!] never provided in continental inns.'<sup>29</sup> (Again, the statement may still have been substantially true and the implied illocutionary—take soap!—still useful, but the *Handbooks*' confusion about the Bénazets' mortality makes us wonder.) Murray's High Victorian travel guides are, in short, hives of (sometimes arguably and sometimes definitely) superannuated information presented as, if not hot off the press, then at least as continuing to refer to an extant socio-spatial reality.

None of this is meant as an especial slight on John Murray's publishing methods, but rather to mark by way of an impressionistic analysis the truth problems of the travel guide book in the context of its rise to mass-market success and cultural power. The claims to representational veracity made by guide books have always tended to rest on a combination of eyewitness authority ('should this book be found to possess any superiority over others of its class, it is because it is based on a personal knowledge of the countries described') and informal confidence ('those routes which have not been travelled over by the author himself have, with very few exceptions, been revised by friends to whom they are actually known').<sup>30</sup> Yet such epistemological crutches, the second of which is frail indeed, could hardly be expected to stand the test of decades. The practical and commercial infeasibility of regular revision (for which perfunctory fact checking is only a partial substitute), the heightened prominence and sway of the format and an atmosphere of swingeing socio-spatial upheaval such as to make Wilkie Collins's bucolic Wildbad (see Introduction) over into Thackeray's 'gay, wicked' spa in the space of a few decades: these factors arguably combined by the 1870s to produce guide books more authoritative and less verisimilar than ever. With the dust of age unswept, the picture of nineteenth-century Baden-Baden left by *Murray's Handbooks* belongs less to the social, sequential edition of time the

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<sup>29</sup> *Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Holland, Belgium and Up the Rhine*. (London: John Murray, 1873), xxiii.

<sup>30</sup> *Murray's Handbook* (1845), vi.

Greeks called *chronos* and rather to the transcendent temporal modality known as *kairos*; or, in Frank Kermode's terms from *The Sense of an Ending*, 'God's time'.<sup>31</sup>

Vasilii Avenarius's spa novella *The Contemporary Idyll* (*Sovremennaia idilliia*, 1867)—discussed in detail in the next chapter—offers an insight into why guide book anachronisms might matter. During an outing from the Swiss whey resort of Interlaken, an Englishman voices his disappointment that the dimensions of a cave cut into the glacier the party is traversing do not correspond with the account of the same cave given in his *Murray's Handbook* ('which, of course, every son of Albion considers it a duty to always have about his person' ('kotorogo, konechno, vsiakii syn Al'biona schitaet dolgom imet' vsegda pri sebe'). The expedition's local guide replies that "although [John] Murray is a highly respected individual, he is nevertheless not enough of a prophet that he can know in advance the depth of the excavation we can make during the year after his guide is published" ("Murrei—chelovek ves'ma pochtennyi, no vse-taki ne prorok, chtoby znat' napered, kakoi glubiny grot vyroetsia nami v sleduiushchem godu").<sup>32</sup>

The scene is not simply a slight on English pedantry (although it is that too, as well as a nod to the long-lived Russian stereotype of Englishmen as engineers). The reliance of tourists upon their guide books was an (international) subject of satire from mid-century, with *Punch*, as ever, leading the way ('[Is] there [...] an English service at Yodeldorf, and is it held in the hotel, and Evangelical, or High Church, and are the sittings free, and what Hymn-book [do] they use?').<sup>33</sup> The gist of such mockery, somewhat ironically in view of the fact-checking problems just outlined, was often that the attention of guide books to material minutiae fostered or reflected a pettifogging approach to knowledge. The 'restless, unsatisfied spirit of seeing and knowing everything' attributed to Murray's guides by a 1862 issue of *London Society* went hand in hand, there was adequate reason to suspect, with a

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<sup>31</sup> Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 46-8.

<sup>32</sup> Avenarius, 'Sovremennaia idilliia', p. 203.

<sup>33</sup> Unsigned, 'The Travelling Companions', *Punch*, 25 July 1891, pp. 40-41 (p. 40).

kind of obtuseness: an obsession with verification and measurement so consuming as to contravene the empirical spirit.<sup>34</sup>

The priggishness of Avenarius's Englishman—and particularly his favouring of book-gleaned, codified knowledge over local expertise and the evidence of his own eyes—registers concern about a creeping totemization of secular-commercial discursive forms (such as the travel guide book or self-improvement manuals in the Samuel Smiles mould) in the context both of the decline in influence of traditional sources of direction and the increasing routinization of geographical mobility epitomized by short-stay tourism. The sociologist and economist Herbert Simon's observation, in *Models of Bounded Rationality* (1982), that '[b]elief in large numbers of facts and propositions that we have not had the opportunity to evaluate independently is basic to the human condition, a corollary of the boundedness of [...] rationality in the face of a complex world' perhaps naturalizes excessively an epistemological attunement which, following Benjamin and Baudrillard, we might also strongly identify with the saturated (and significantly totalizing) knowledge climate of industrial modernity. Avenarius, later in his career a historical novelist with marked halcyon tendencies and manifesting elsewhere in *The Contemporary Idyll* a distinct suspicion of vogues in dress, science, gender relations and philosophy, travesties excessive deference to 'Mr. Murray' as part of a broader platform against (empirical) 'prophets' with feet of clay.

### The Hangover: Self-Conscious Spa Fiction from Thackeray to Sebald

The dramatic proliferation of representational technologies and authorities widely acknowledged as a defining feature of industrial and post-industrial modernity is associated with a diminishment of the extent to which the hypermediated consumer can toggle freely between (and distinguish between) unmediated

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<sup>34</sup> 'There is a trial in every path, a crook in every lot. The trial and the crook in my lot on the Continent is—Murray. Not only his bulky size, his hard unsympathetic red outside, and his small provoking print, but the restless, unsatisfied spirit of seeing and knowing everything that pervades him.' Unsigned, 'Gambling spas: Homburg', *London Society*, December 1862. p. 495.

experience and immersion in second-order images. Baudrillard, who as I note in my Introduction locates the origins of hypermediation in the ‘serial-technical’ advances of the nineteenth century, devotes a large part of his philosophical project to epistemological provocations designed to destabilize the distinction between the two planes, the notorious apotheosis of this effort being his positing of a ‘third’ (and occasionally a ‘fourth’) ‘order of simulacra’ in which the distinction between representation and referential reality effectively collapses.

The fictional texts that are the focus of the second half of this chapter suggest an alternative emphasis with respect to the function and sway in (post-) modernity of what I will persist, *pace* Baudrillard, in calling second-order images. After a preamble by way of Alain Resnais’ *Last Year at Marienbad* and the self-conscious Victorian and Edwardian spa texts of Thackeray and Violet Hunt, I discuss three novel(la)s—Leonid Tsypkin’s *Summer in Baden-Baden*, Bruce Chatwin’s *Utz* and W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz*—in which images of nineteenth-century resort culture ambivalently condition mid- and late-twentieth-century experience.

As intellectuals, Tsypkin, Chatwin and Sebald’s focalizers are not easily construed as the unreflecting victims of simulacra. Rather they actively cultivate and construct, in a manner suggesting scholarship and antiquarian collectorship as literalizable figures for repression and fantasy, the anachronistic cavalcade of images of the past that significantly monopolizes their narrative consciousnesses. In contrast to the perplexed narrators of Dostoevskii and Ford, their willed submersion (it can feel like refuge) in stories from the past often seems to register a constriction, rather than a dizzying hypertrophization, of imaginative and narrative possibility in the present.

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Both my foregoing discussion of the poetics and cultural penetration of the guide book and the narratives of immersive scholarship and collectorship I have just introduced raise formidable questions about memory, experience and the potential beholdenness of both to other people’s ideas. An intuitive (if not necessarily



clarifying) touchstone for such a discussion, especially in the context of a thesis about representations of resort culture, is *Last Year in Marienbad* (*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*), Alain Resnais' genre-making 1961 art film for which the novelist and theorist of the 'anti-psychological' *nouveau roman* Alain Robbe-Grillet wrote the screenplay.

*Last Year in Marienbad* is set in a sumptuous hotel (possibly a country house) in an unspecified Continental European location. The film's plot is as calculatedly opaque as its setting, but involves the pursuit of a young woman (Delphine Seyrig) by a man (Giorgio Albertazzi) who insists, despite her denials, that the pair met—and conceived an intimate attachment—the previous year at the spa of Marienbad.

By 1961, Marienbad, for much of the nineteenth century the most fashionable resort in the Austro-Hungarian empire, was officially known by its Czech name, Mariánské Lázně. But Robbe-Grillet's screenplay is as resistant to such historical niceties as it is to the rest of psychological realism's anchoring paraphernalia. Among *Last Year in Marienbad's* many perplexities is the question of which parts of the narrative can be ascribed to lived experience as usually understood—and which to ontological planes generally given less credence in modern culture (reverie, imagination, remembrance). Did the pair played by Seyrig and Albertazzi 'truly' meet at Marienbad—and what might 'truly' mean? Jean-Louis Leutrat has written that Resnais and Robbe-Grillet's narrative 'opposes, to the Cartesianism of conscious life, the baroque nature of our memory and our affective life', but I would suggest that the film in fact seeks to undermine the very distinction upon which such a reading depends.<sup>35</sup>

*Last Year in Marienbad's* opening voiceover, an enigmatic and fragmentary monologue a section of which I take as the epigraph to this chapter, offers the film's setting, with its labyrinthine corridors, intricately ornamented rooms and unmistakable but difficult-to-pin-down air of the past ('cette construction d'une autre siècle'), as a metaphor for the edifice of human memory. But where, to insist for a moment upon literal as well as figural clarification, might we be?

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<sup>35</sup>Jean-Louis Leutrat, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, trans. by Paul Hammond (London: British Film Institute, 2000), pp. 32-33.

Both the extravagant (but calculatedly generic) rococo architecture of the premises in which Albertazzi's pursuit of Seyrig is played out and the concentricism, wide boulevards and geometric topiary of that establishment's outdoor spaces mildly redole of the spatial arrangements of some of the nineteenth-century's grander Continental resorts. (In 1842 Chambers' *Edinburgh Journal* described the topography of Baden-Baden thus: 'a wide avenue of trees [...] a grand promenade or terrace, the upper side of which is lined with a row of elegant buildings [...] In front, gently sloping towards the lower promenades and the [River] Oos, is a beautiful green lawn, surrounded by rows of chestnut-trees in full leaf'.)<sup>36</sup> More concretely, the eerily fastidious sociability and fearful material symmetry of Resnais's *mises-en-scène* recall Heikki Lempa's sense of 1840s Bad Pyrmont as a socially disciplinary locus—and set off associations with Ford's Bad Nauheim.

Like Ford, who has John Dowell meditate on everything from indoor palms to saplings in tubs, Resnais returns compulsively to the Derridean 'virtuality' represented by trees—which, unlike *Last Year in Marienbad*'s human furniture cast no shadow, [See Fig. 8]).<sup>37</sup> And if *The Good Soldier's ménage à quatre* is not obviously mirrored in Robbe-Grillet's screenplay (which appears, although nothing is certain, to narrate a *ménage à trois*), some of Resnais's visual compositions [see Fig. 9] certainly speak to the idea of a four (or a partner-swapping 'minuet'). Finally, the (apparent) motif of adultery and an unshakeable sense that, for the film's narrative to cohere, somebody (Albertazzi or Seyrig) *must be lying* whispers at a resuscitation of the nineteenth-century's dualistic watering place text.

*Last Year in Marienbad* cannot, according to any straightforward narrative logic, take place at Marienbad—why, in that case, would Albertazzi's character need to express his appeal to memory in the terms that give the work its title? Nor am I suggesting Bad Nauheim, Bad Pyrmont or any other named spa as a setting. Rather, touching lightly multiple valves of a significantly diffuse cultural text to

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<sup>36</sup> Unsigned, 'A Few Weeks on the Continent', *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, 15 January 1842, pp. 409-410 (p. 409).

<sup>37</sup> On Derrida and organizing virtualities, see Paul H. Fry, *Theory of Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 126-128.



Figure 8: The *Kurgarten* (?) in *Last Year At Marienbad*



Figure 9: (L-R) Giorgio Albertazzi, Delphine Seyrig, Sacha Pitoëff and Karin Toche-Mittler

produce a teasingly unplaceable atmospheric note, the film (and here an analogy suggests itself with the uncanny condensations that take place in the Freudian ‘dream work’) approaches the status of a precision-engineered haze. The Bressonian, cataleptic delivery of the leads and incantatory repetitions of Robbe-Grillet’s screenplay round off the impression of a narrative whose mimetic affinities lie neither with history nor memory nor psychology but with the nebulous yet totalizing mental atmosphere characteristic of the final moments before sleep.

We might find in the soporifically circular and non-progressive rhythms of Resnais’s film a glancing reflection of the spinning wheel of elite fashion in the century before the First World War, deriving the sense that, though last year might have been Marienbad and *this* year Vichy or Wiesbaden, Bad Ems or Menton, the song remains the same. Spatial and subjective interchangeability and the flattening of affect that it can provoke in any event are vital to the film’s structural opacity—the bases of an abstraction that, rather than doing away with the psyche as an object of narrative interest (as Robbe-Grillet frequently claimed for his fiction) speaks keenly to a particular configuration thereof: a condition of mind and of experience in which ambience overpowers both reference and feeling.

One of the more mundane among the surfeit of readings that *Last Year in Marienbad* accommodates (though it would jar with Robbe-Grillet’s persistent refusal to countenance psychological readings of his literary output) involves the idea that Albertazzi’s character is suffering from a disorder that has brought about in him the collapse of the always-porous mental barrier between the ideal and the real, and the lived and the remembered (or fantasized—or read-about). Yet it is not necessary to reach for such a literalistic interpretation to see Resnais’ film as enacting an imaginative collocation of ontological planes.

A comparable collapse of boundaries occurs or threatens to occur in the novel(las) by Tsygkin, Chatwin and Sebald I am about to discuss. By contrast (and as I will first briefly illustrate by way of a return to Thackeray and Violet Hunt) the metafictional self-consciousness of the great (post-1840, pre-1914) age of writing on resort culture is marked less by a grave sense of the borders between texts and consciousnesses being swept away than by a wry and confident pleasure in their transgressibility.

Nineteenth-century writing often occupies an uneasy place in paradigmatic discussions of compositional self-consciousness. As Andreas Schönle has noted in a study of the Romantic travel narratives of Laurence Sterne (*A Sentimental Journey*, 1768) and Nikolai Karamzin (*Letters of a Russian Traveller*, 1791-92), '[displays of narratorial] awareness that [a] text arises in imitation of textual antecedents rather than from a straightforward intent to describe extratextual reality' have long been valorized by arbiters of literary quality. Schönle even suggests that '[t]he more zealously intertextual a text the more fictional and therefore literary it [has usually been perceived to] be.'<sup>38</sup> Schönle's remarks could also be applied, without controversy, to the post-modern narrative paradigm. But in an immediately post-Romantic context (to apply an admittedly broad generalization) narratorial consciousness of belatedness typically resolves itself in an obeisance to representational tradition (by which I mean not only the high-cultural canon) rather than foregrounding a sense that writing about a venerable topic might have to hedge significantly its claims to real-world referentiality. Yet texts with a socially mimetic drift by no means always display this tendency— and some spa narratives in a broadly realist tradition walk with enjoyment the gossamer-thin line that separates making fun of cliché from perpetuating it.

Thackeray is the arch-practitioner of this ambivalent narrative mode—and deploying Mr. Titmarsh as his alter ego helps him pull it off. As the book's title suggests, *The Kickleburys on the Rhine's* amused reflections on Continental spa culture (introduced in Chapter 2) arrive in the context of a gentle satire on mid-century British travellers to Germany. In the 1850s, under the influence of modern classics like Byron's *Childe Harold*, Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* (1834) and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hyperion* (1838) (not to mention Murray's guides—which quoted liberally Byron's admiration for the region), thousands of tourists went on steam-packet tours from London—via Ramsgate and Ostend—to the Rhine Gorge. ("How do you do, Captain Hicks?", I

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<sup>38</sup> Schönle, *Authenticity and Fiction in the Russian Literary Journey 1790-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 9.

say. “Where are you going?” “Oh, I am going to the Whine,” says Hicks; ‘evewybody goes to the Whine.’”).<sup>39</sup> For many, the culmination of the journey was a visit to a spa (usually Bad Ems or Wiesbaden, both being recommended in guide books as a genteel foil to the dramatic landscape of the Rhine).

*The Kickleburys* registers how successfully the literary canon, and particularly the escapist appeal of Romanticism, had been co-opted by modern tourist culture. The Romantic motifs and locutions that helped drive the Rhine Gorge tourist boom, many of which were themselves adaptations from earlier German sources, are resuscitated even as their tiredness is paraded. ‘When we came to the steamer [for the final leg of the journey to Rougetnoirbourg] “the castled crag of Drachenfels” rose up in the sunrise before us’, remarks Mr. Titmarsh, announcing with inverted commas a direct (or possibly indirect, since the poem is quoted in *Murray’s Handbooks*) borrowing from Canto III of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*.<sup>40</sup> The castle and hill of Drachenfels, at which Siegfried slays a dragon in the German epic *Nibelungenlied*, were a popular visitor attraction by the 1850s; and Thackeray’s narrator appears at pains to play the self-aware tourist—a new position of distinction for an age of mass travel. But intertextual vigilance is difficult to sustain around the clock. ‘See! the mist clears off Drachenfels’, Mr. Titmarsh declares, less self-consciously but still evidently channeling *Childe Harold*, in the text’s final lines.<sup>41</sup> The impossibility of finally determining whether these words are evidence of forgetfulness or irony on the part of Mr. Titmarsh (or indeed, his creator) is significant: it is perhaps his capacity to shuttle between typicality and wry distance that most distinguishes Thackeray’s literary output in a Victorian fictional context.

As Thackeray invokes the indelibility of Byron, so Violet Hunt, in a watering-place narrative written six decades later, invokes the indelibility of Thackeray. Hunt’s *The Desirable Alien at Home and in Germany*, conceived

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<sup>39</sup> *The Kickleburys*, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34. The lines from *Childe Harold*: ‘The castled crag of Drachenfels/Frowns o’er the wide and winding Rhine’. See Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, 5 vols, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 2, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> *The Kickleburys*, p. 87.

during the same spa tour that gave rise to Ford's *The Good Soldier*, raises an intriguing question about intertextual time-lag. To what extent is the imaginative penetration of classic narratives enhanced (or diminished) by social change—by the very fact of their going out of date? Part of the appeal for Victorians of Byron's 'castled crag of Drachenfels' was surely its anachronism in an age of steam packets and casinos. Hunt, by a similar token (and with Ford-like phrasing), recalls arriving at Baden-Baden and Bad Homburg with very particular, fictionally inscribed expectations:

[Nauheim's] clients are, of course, thoroughly cosmopolitan, comprising complacent financiers, hungry adventurers, beauties "on the make" of every type and nationality—at least so I am led to suppose, and I fancy that is the attraction of these foreign baths to the English [...I expected] the first time I went to Baden-Baden and Bad Homburg to see sinister-looking, pernicious gentlemen engrossed in *petits chevaux* or baccarat. Thackeray had named them for me [...I]t was only after I had been about that I realized that the most sinister-looking of them were respectable English stockbrokers [...]<sup>42</sup>

Bourgeois culture has a long track record of reincarnating at an imaginary level the social forms it sweeps away. In much Victorian writing on German spa culture, symbols of the Romantic Rhine cohabit with the more urbane but still swashbuckling image of spas thronged by 'hungry adventurers [and] beauties "on the make" of every type and nationality'. In Hunt's 1913 survey of watering-place cliché, the Romantic interest has rather evaporated, but the mid-nineteenth century's cosmopolitan, binarizing spa text is in rude health—despite the colour-sapping incursions of morning-suited finance capital.

Indeed, Hunt's account speaks to an easy, *plus ça change* sort of syncretism. Edwardian stockbrokers, their lack of vividness signaling a continuing imaginative need for Thackerayean 'pernicious gentlemen' (who were, of course, parodic figures in the first place), nonetheless feel like modern iterations of the same—thanks in large part to the figural affinity between gambling and brokerage. Their villa-dwelling, periodical-consuming (and frisson-seeking) spouses,

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<sup>42</sup> *The Desirable Alien*, p. 96-97.

meanwhile, furnish the ongoing demand for the anachronistic pantomime that Hunt finds in early twentieth-century Continental spa culture: '[t]he shady people are the décor, the attraction provided for Mrs. Brown of Brixton, who is there, with Mrs. Jones of Ealing, in force enough to make these places pay [...] boldly touch[ing] hems with, it was fondly hoped, unmentionable ladies.'<sup>43</sup>

Neither Thackeray nor Hunt's spa narrative evinces any particular alarm at modern apperception's saturation in second-order images. Unlike, say, Veselitskaia's Mimi at Zheleznovodsk or Druzhinin's 'Russian Circassian' at Piatigorsk (see Chapter 1), both narrators suspend their disbelief willingly and, importantly, provisionally. They are conscious of their 'belatedness'—their being 'awash', in Harold Bloom's terms from *A Map of Misreading*, in 'the Word not quite [their own]'—but hardly neurotically so.<sup>44</sup>

The pleasures of anachronism can be actively immersive as well as wryly contrastive, with a colourizing interlude of half a century or more not compulsory. An unsigned article from an 1874 issue of *Appleton's Journal of Literature, Science and Art* endeavours 'by the magical aid of memory [to] present to your view Baden[-Baden] as it *was* [before the *Spielverbot* of 1871]'. Invoked for the purpose are a string of still-topical celebrity proper names (Offenbach, Pauline Viardot, the King of Prussia), with the reader exhorted to 'suppose sallying forth from the gardens of the Badischer Hof about midday in early June, the loveliest month of the year (shall we say 1869?)'.<sup>45</sup> At only five years' distance, the author codifies what is in a late-nineteenth century context a discursively near-ubiquitous halcyonism with respect to spa culture, though the fact that the journal belonged to the stable of William (the son of Daniel) Appleton, also the publisher of Appleton's guide books, puts a less guileless complexion on its attempt to rejuvenate Baden-Baden's imaginative appeal after the blow of the *Spielverbot*.

*Contra*—perhaps—paradigmatic expectation, the three postmodern

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>44</sup> See Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.16.

<sup>45</sup> Unsigned, 'Reminiscences of Baden-Baden', *Appleton's Journal of Literature, Science and Art*, 10 October 1874, p. 471-2.



narratives I am about to discuss adopt a less playful stance with respect to their implication in an increasingly dematerialized economy of impressions. In Leonid Tsypkin's *Summer in Baden-Baden* (*Leto v Badene*, 1982), Bruce Chatwin's *Utz* (1988) and W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), 'the constructions of another century' can seem to stand importunately in the way of topo-graphic self-control—although all three texts cultivate a creeping sense that their focalizers have colluded in putting up the barrier.

'The most useless of refugees, an aesthete': Mediation and Self-Preservation in the Spa Fiction of Tsypkin, Chatwin and Sebald

Written in three different languages by three writers whose non- or para-literary primary vocations make them outsiders even in the poorly-coteried context of literary postmodernism, *Summer in Baden-Baden*, *Utz* and *Austerlitz* are superficially united in their use of frame narratives (Tsypkin and Sebald make more innovative use of such embedding than Chatwin), their blending of the novel form with historical and biographical narrative, and by their engagement with a topic—spa culture—which by the time of writing was at least a century away from being topical.

More importantly, perhaps, the documentary fictions of Tsypkin, a research scientist, Sebald, an academic, and Chatwin, a travel writer and antiquarian, evince a shared concern for the mesmeric quality of, and ambivalent comfort offered by, the labour of narrativization that underpins, to a greater or lesser degree, all three professions.

Finally, all three texts approach from a special—and broadly similar—perspective the aggravated belatedness of (post-)modern cognition and narration. For Tsypkin's narrator, Sebald's Jacques Austerlitz and Chatwin's Kaspar Utz, immersion in the resort culture of the past serves, in different ways, to cauterize the experience and memory of mid-twentieth century totalitarianisms.

‘Safe Passage’?: Leonid Tsypkin’s *Summer in Baden-Baden*

*Summer in Baden-Baden* has been celebrated—loudly in Western postmodernist circles (Susan Sontag promoted it in the 1990s), somewhat less so in Russia—as a ‘lost’ masterpiece of Soviet prose. Completed shortly before Tsypkin’s death in 1982, the book, whose title carries an ironic (but not evidently intentional) echo of Eugène Guinot’s 1853 guide-book-cum-puff piece *A Summer at Baden-Baden*, blends fiction, memoir and biographical scholarship with the effect of destabilizing the boundaries between the three forms. Tsypkin’s use of run-on sentences—which often last for upwards of twenty pages, collocating multiple diffuse temporalities—further involutes the question of which stories belong to whom, and what truth and authority in narration might mean. Sontag, not without justification, called *Summer in Baden-Baden* ‘a kind of dream novel’, and one productive way of approaching the text centers on the question of whether the poetics of transtemporal identification concocted by Tsypkin amount to a good dream—reverie as respite—or something more like a nightmare.<sup>46</sup>

The narrative interlaces a Brezhnev-era Russian winter and the Dostoevskii’s German summer of 1867 (already evoked in Chapter 3 of this study). A Tsypkin-like intellectual, travelling by train from Moscow to Leningrad, begins reading Anna Dostoevskii’s diary in a tattered copy borrowed from his aunt. As he does so, a second journey-narrative—‘Ania’ and ‘Fedia’s’ trip from Petersburg to Baden-Baden via Vilno and Dresden, as recorded by Dostoevskaiia—arises in vivid, at times overpowering counterpoint to the first. The remainder of the text commingles the Dostoevskii’s honeymoon summer—marked by bitter arguments with waiters, landladies and one another—and the narrator’s time in Leningrad, during which he combines social calls with research visits to the Dostoevskii house-museum and other sites associated with the writer.

Gabrielle Cavagnaro has suggested that Dostoevskaiia’s diary of 1867 serves for Tsypkin’s narrator as a textual refuge—albeit a paradoxical one—from a vexing contemporary reality. Tsypkin was Jewish and a doctor by profession. His father

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<sup>46</sup>See Sontag, ‘Loving Dostoevskii’, in Tsypkin, *Summer in Baden-Baden*, trans. by Roger and Angela Keys (London: Penguin, 2006), xi-xxxiv (xxiii).

had been a victim of the anti-Semitic persecution of the late Stalin period and his own career was dogged by related prejudice. Among other indignities, Tsypkin was demoted from a prestigious post in medical research as a result of his son's emigration to the United States in 1977. His own attempts to emigrate—and his tentative efforts to publish his own literary work—were frustrated by the stagnant and repressive cultural climate of the Soviet Union of the late 1970s.<sup>47</sup> As Cavagnaro has it, 'Dostoevsky seems to function, for Tsypkin, as a means of both creative self-clarification and personal defense [...] ironically enough, Dostoevsky provides "safe passage" through the straits of personal crisis—a shield from anti-Semitic persecution'.<sup>48</sup>

'Ironically', of course, in view of Dostoevskii's own anti-Semitism, which looms large in the text's account of the couple's German summer. I would question, however, the degree to which what Cavagnaro reads as a narrative about 'the recuperative potential in another's word' in fact holds out even such an ambivalent species of consolation.<sup>49</sup> The idea of 'safe passage' implies a relationship of protection between two distinct entities: a sense of the narrator being able to burrow, for juxtapositive consolation, into Dostoevskii's subjectivity—without getting lost there. The intertwined relationship between *Summer in Baden-Baden*'s two principal narrative strands does not quite support such a reading. For one thing, the Dostoevskii's travails do not obviously mirror (and only enigmatically echo) the narrator's crisis, which in any event remains largely undisclosed in Tsypkin's text. Cavagnaro's reading is thus heavily reliant on an assumption of a straightforward ontological continuity between Tsypkin (the Dostoevskii-loving victim of anti-Semitic discrimination) and the 'I' of the novel. For another, rather than obviously offering scholarship as a 'shield', *Summer in Baden-Baden* rubs significantly at the distinction between the subjectivity of Tsypkin's scholar-narrator and the transtemporal being—past but vividly

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<sup>47</sup> *Summer in Baden-Baden* was first published in *Novaia gazeta*, a Russian émigré journal based in New York.

<sup>48</sup> Gabrielle Cavagnaro, 'Leonid Tsypkin's *Leto v Badene* and the Art of Reproduction' in *Poetics, Self, Place: Essays in Honor of Anna Lisa Crone*, ed. by Catherine O'Neil, Nicole Boudreau and Sarah Krive (Bloomington: Slavica, 2007), pp. 494-507 (p. 496).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 497.

present—of his research subject. The effect is frequently discombobulating—for the narrator as well as for the reader.

At times, admittedly, Tsypkin's text can read like a fairly straightforward exercise in imaginative life writing ('[T]he Dostoevskiis' life in Baden-Baden began to resemble a sleepless night, during which, sunk though you are in a kind of haze, you feel at once that time is passing and that no end to the darkness is in sight'; '[Zh]izn' Dostoevskikh v Badene stala podkhodit' na bessonnuiu noch', kogda dazhe sil'no poguzivshis' v dremu, chuvstvuesh', kak idet vremia i, vmeste s tem, kontsa etoi noch'i ne predvidetsia').<sup>50</sup> But elsewhere, the lines of sympathy and identification are drawn less clearly. Much of *Summer in Baden-Baden* dwells in the kind of nocturnal fraying of horizons (particularly temporal horizons) to which the Dostoevskiis' time at the spa is compared. In the following passage, Ania's concern for Fedia after he has an epileptic fit at Dresden touches off, as in a row of stringed incendiaries, images of Dostoevskii's deathbed in 1881 *and* the narrator's life in 1970s Moscow:

and she was once again standing before him on her knees, looking into his eyes, smoothing his forehead, and he, searching out her other hand, took it and pressed it to his lips—thirteen and a half years later he took her hand to his lips in that manner, after she had read to him a passage from the Gospels, mysterious to them both, and asked her to bring his children to him to say farewell—then he was lying in his Petersburg apartment on a leather sofa above whose back was a photograph of the Sistine Madonna, given to him for his birthday [...] his eyes are closed, the expression on his face is stern and at the same time conciliatory, as is almost always the case with the dead, and a long, somehow still dark beard of curled hair—I see exactly such a beard almost every morning on the trolleybus—it belongs to an old man who sits down spryly on the trolleybus at the stop next to a clean, two-storey detached building whose windows are always curtained and outside which stands a board with the inscription 'Council for Religious Affairs of the Council of Ministers of the USSR' [...].

[и она снова уже стояла возле него на коленях, смотрела ему в глаза, гладила его лоб, а он, отыскав ее другую руку, притянул ее к себе и прижал к губам, — через тринадцать с половиной лет

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<sup>50</sup>Tsypkin, *Leto v Badene* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003), p. 113. Further references in parenthesis.

он точно так же притянул к своим губам ее руку, после того как она прочла ему загаданное им в Евангелии место, и попросил пригласить к нему детей, чтобы попрощаться, — он лежал тогда в своей петербургской квартире на кожаном диване со спинкой под фотографией Сикстинской Мадонны, подаренной ему ко дню рождения—[...]глаза закрыты, выражение лица строгое и вместе с тем умиротворенное, как это бывает почти у всех мертвых, и длинная, почему-то темная борода из завивающихся в виде колец волос — точно такую же бороду я вижу почти каждое утро в троллейбусе — она принадлежит старику, бодро сажающемуся в троллейбус на остановке возле двухэтажного чистого особняка, окна которого всегда занавешены и на котором висит доска с надписью: «Совет по делам религии при Совете Министров СССР»].

(43)

In this passage (slightly abridged here—the original is more involuted still), comprehension is taxed by the use of dashes instead of periods and by the omission of clarifying proper nouns. Both devices help figure the thematic of intertemporal and intersubjective identification (even merger). A change of tense about halfway through ('his eyes are closed') and the break in syntax that follows further muddy the dynamic arrangement of past and present, proximity and distance. But yet more striking is the temporal direction in which the associations that structure the narrative move: not backward as in Proustian *mémoire involontaire*, but forward into the future. Rather than a contemporary stimulus (the old man with the Dostoevskii beard) prompting recall or book-learned knowledge, it is the narrator's phenomenological consciousness that irrupts like a reverie upon the diegetically privileged narrative of Dostoevskii's death (which in turn intrudes in the manner of a premonition—whose is unclear—upon the writer's visit to Europe).

*Summer in Baden-Baden's* watering-place passages further upset conventional narrative procedure for the registering, rendering and attribution of apperception. They not only collocate distinct temporal and spatial planes, but also interfuse fiction and historical reality—(apparently) ideal and (apparently) material form.

Arriving in Baden-Baden, Ania and Fedia rent rooms. They are waited upon by a maid ('cheerful [...] but incredibly stupid, as, after all, all Germans are, the men and the women ('veselaia [...] no udivitel'naia tupaia, kak, vprochem, vse nemtsy i nemki') (72). These last remarks are probably best read (although, as I have suggested, the allocation of narrative voice is always a speculative matter in Tsypkin's text) as Ania's parroting of Fedia's xenophobia. Then, in a strange, temporally condensing simile, the first few days of the couple's stay ('pervye dni prebyvaniia v Badene') are then compared to 'the morning of a clear summer's day, when you are hurrying somewhere' ('utro iasnogo letnogo dnia, kogda toropish'sia kuda-to'; 72).

The most straightforward reading of this simile is as follows: identification with the sense of ease felt by the Dostoevskiis (and recorded by Anna) at the end of their long train journey has prompted the narrator, who by this point has lain latent in the narrative for some time (sunk in reverie on the Moscow-Leningrad train, to read the novel in the most literal oneiric terms) to recall feelings and memories from his childhood in Minsk in the 1930s. (This is the temporo-spatial domain to which the picture of a clear summer morning refers.)

This apparently idyllic image from a Soviet childhood is thematically incongruous with a nineteenth-century married couple's relief at reaching a spa resort. It also carries with it, as all happy associations do, the shadow of happiness's end, and the tone of freshness introduced by the invocation of childhood is immediately tempered by a recollection of Minsk in ruins after the Second World War.

Thus for three pages (73-75), almost immediately after their arrival at Baden-Baden, it is the Dostoevskiis' whose narrative is effaced as Tsypkin's narrator falls to exploring the recollections their getting there has triggered for him. The text then returns to Baden-Baden in 1867, where Fedia is gaming and losing heavily. A description of the hat Dostoevskii is wearing when he announces his losses to Ania during a walk (76-77) becomes the sensate trigger for an account of his early career in the 1840s, and especially his relations with his then-'idol' (*kumir*), Turgenev (78). (Here the question of whether Tsypkin is 'implanting' memory and experience, as in historical fiction, or 'reconstructing' them as in

biography, is difficult to settle.) Only four pages later do Ania and Fedia resume their Baden-Baden walk. The ‘mingling’ (*skreshchivat’sia*—the verb can also imply interbreeding) of the couple’s shadows in the evening sunshine—although ‘it can only have seemed that way, because such a thing contradicted the simplest rules of physics’ (‘Eto moglo tol’ko tak kazat’sia, potomu chto protivorechilo samym prostym zakonom fisiki’)—evokes (for whom we cannot clearly divine) an image of their unborn children (‘the future Misha and Sonechka’; ‘budushchie Misha i Sonechka’) (81).

But the associative operations of the imagination are not singular. The image of a mingled pair also gives rise—again, in whose consciousness it is unclear—to the thought of Dostoevskii’s writer-contemporaries Turgenev and Goncharov, whom Fedia and Ania have previously run across at Baden-Baden. The spleen that accompanies this winding train of cognition (which collocates memory, imagination and *ressentiment*) presumably ‘belongs’ to Fedia:

Goncharov, a flabby, puffed up gent like his [character] Oblomov, for whom he was paid 400 roubles a page at the very moment that he, Dostoevskii, despite his need, was being paid 100 roubles in total, had rotten eyes, like a boiled fish’s, and was steeped in the smell of the chancellery, although with what he earned he needn’t have worked, but avarice probably had its way, although this didn’t stop him staying at the Europe, the best hotel in Baden—Turgenev stayed here too, together with that Litvinov of his, from *Smoke* [...].

[у Гончарова, такого же вялого и одутловатого барина, как и его Обломов, за которого ему платили 400 рублей с листа, в то время как ему, Достоевскому, при его нужде платили всего 100 рублей, были какие-то тухлые глаза, как у вареной рыбы, и весь он был пропитан запахом канцелярии, хотя при его доходах мог бы не работать, но, наверное, скупость брала свое, что, впрочем, не мешало ему останавливаться в «Европе», лучшем отеле Бадена, — здесь же стоял и Тургенев вместе со своим Литвиновым из «Дыма»].

(82)

‘Digression’ and ‘stream of consciousness’ both partially describe what *Summer in Baden-Baden* offers here and throughout. Tsyarkin, in the modernist tradition,

provides a mimetics of cognition at work—its difficult-to-repress tracing of non-linear associative pathways and recourse to non-binary oppositions. Perception, characteristically, traverses its object from the outside in—here from Goncharov’s physiognomy to the content of his character—before redounding upon the self by evaluative reflex. Time in the mind, meanwhile, as St. Augustine was among the first to observe and as Tsyarkin’s centrifugal narration of the Dostoevskii’s time at Baden-Baden demonstrates, has many vectors; and it is in the nature of the overlapping perceptual fields designated by the unsatisfactory terms ‘memory’ and ‘imagination’ to buck against the linear-causal structuring of human awareness at which *logos* aims.

But what most distinguishes *Summer in Baden-Baden* is less its mimetic concern to narrate the processing of experience by a single *cogito* than its aliveness to the multiple senses in which we share our minds with others. The intermingling of Ania’s and Fedia’s shadows in contradiction of the ‘most basic laws of physics’ figures the multiple encroachments of the other upon the self that the text describes. Reading, remembering, projection, rivalry, even marriage—combine to render identity, in the sense of a self-willed, self-consistent quantity engaged in ordered commerce with the external world, just another narrative fiction. Above all, Tsyarkin’s novel describes a dance of endless intersubjective resonance and implication.

Is the vision a happy one? Tsyarkin’s narrator at times looks the ideal scholar, blending radical immersion in his research project with due distance. But the qualifications and modulatory locutions (‘for fairness’s sake, it must be noted that’ (‘radi spravedlivosti nado zametit [...]’) (25) that mark the beginning of *Summer in Baden-Baden* read by the end like vainly rhetorical attempts to reassert a diminishing autonomy of voice and action. ‘Why was I travelling to Petersburg—yes, not to Leningrad, to Petersburg—to walk the streets walked by this short-legged little man (although, after all, most of the inhabitants of the last century were so built) with a face like a church warden or a retired soldier?’ (‘Otchego ekhal v Peterburg—da, ne v Leningrad, a v Peterburg, po ulitsam kotorogo khodil etot korotkonogii, nevysokii (kak, v prochem, naverno, i bol’shinstvo zhitelei proshlogo veka) chelovek so litsom tserkovnogo storozha ili



otstavnogo soldata?’ (25). The question maps the struggle: historicizing parenthesis represents an attempt to put the past in its place, but Soviet Leningrad’s perceptual jockeying with its double, imperial Petersburg, speaks on the contrary to a creeping fusion of horizons.

No clinching answer offers itself to the question of why the Tsyarkin-character should feel such a need to shadow Dostoevskii—or should feel so shadowed by him. Petersburg and Baden-Baden, both (but especially the latter) symbols of cosmopolitanism in a nineteenth-century Russian context, ultimately offer no relief from Soviet Leningrad: Fedia’s detestation of ‘Yids’ (*zhidy*, *zhidki*, *zhidochki* etc; see 24; 92; 114; 153), whom he and Ania see everywhere, pursues the narrator everywhere, spoiling the sanctity of his identification. Among Tsyarkin’s sources for the 1867-set sections of *Summer in Baden-Baden* was *Roulettenburg* (1932), a biographical novel by Leonid Grossman, another Russian Jew captivated by Dostoevskii. But unlike *Roulettenburg*, which Grossman dedicated to Dostoevskii’s genius, *Summer in Baden-Baden* does not attempt to redeem its narrator’s obsession—or that obsession’s object. Not only Dostoevskii’s anti-Semitism but also his discomfiting interest in young girls figures prominently in the intertextual salmagundi of Tsyarkin’s narrative, reflections on the child-prostitute passage in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (*Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniakh*, 1863) setting of a train of associations that leads, and not by way of literary excellence, to Nabokov’s *Lolita*. Rather than straightforwardly offering ‘safe passage’, Dostoevskii’s presence in *Summer in Baden-Baden* is something that can neither be escaped nor finally tamed. He and Tsyarkin’s narrator live intimately together at a century’s distance—but they are not necessarily doing one another any favours.

#### Collectorship as Metaphor: Chatwin’s *Utz*

The imagination, suggests Proust’s narrator, is ‘like a barrel organ that does not work properly and always plays a different tune from the one it should.’ ([n]otre imagination [est] comme un orgue de Barbarie détraqué qui joue toujours autre

chose que l'air indiqué').<sup>51</sup> *Utz*, one of three novels Bruce Chatwin wrote during a career more celebrated for renovating travel writing as a form, resembles *Summer in Baden-Baden* in two important ways: in registering the flourishes and the bum notes of a consciousness loaded with other people's narratives; and in offering the Continental watering place as the avatar of a past at once unsinkable and impossible to retrieve fully. In *Time and Narrative (Temps et récit, 1984-1988)*, Paul Ricoeur demonstrates how the human experience of time has been reconfigured by written narratives; Chatwin's short novel appears to suggest—though late plot developments complicate the proposition—that much the same is true of the topographic imagination (i.e. that our sense of a place can owe as much to what we have read and heard about that place as about what we might have done in it.)

Chatwin's hero is Kaspar Joachim Utz, a Jewish art expert in Normalization-era Prague and the 'owner of a spectacular collection of Meissen porcelain which, through his adroit manoeuvres, had survived the Second World War and the years of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia [...] all crammed into [a] tiny two-roomed flat on Široká Street'.<sup>52</sup> Utz, appropriately in a text that foregrounds experience's necrophiliac aspect, dies in the book's opening lines. Attending the funeral, the novel's narrator, a Chatwin-like journalist and historian, is prompted to recall how the two came to be acquainted.

As the narrator tells it, he discovered *Utz* while researching an 'article to be part of a larger work on the psychology—or psychopathology—of the compulsive collector' (3). Utz, recommended to him as a 'Rudolf of our time'—the reference is to Emperor Rudolf II, who collected 'exotica' as a 'cure for depression'—lives a quietly anachronistic existence in socialist Prague, having apparently avoided the confiscation and nationalization of his valuable collection by an implicit promise to bequeath it to the state upon his death (3-8).

Utz's collectorship is an ambivalent ethical quantity in Chatwin's narrative.

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<sup>51</sup> *The Guernantes Way*, trans. by Mark Treharne (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 40; for original see Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 7 vols, ed. by Jean-Yves Tadie (Paris: Gallimard, 1987-1989), 2, p. 342.

<sup>52</sup> Chatwin, *Utz* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 4. Further references in parenthesis.

On the one hand, his porcelain is of real historical interest (though the narrator dislikes the Meissen style). On the other hand, the passion for accumulation and horror of ephemerality that collecting implies is made ridiculous: Utz's friend Orlik, a 'palaeontologue' (9), collects flies. Utz, too, is repeatedly made out to be a pathetic or morbid figure; as the narrator observes, '[i]n Grimm's Etymological Wordbook, 'utz' carries any number of negative connotations: "drunk", "dimwit", "cardsharp", "dealer in dud horses"' (5). Utz's 'mania' for collecting is described (by a doctor) as a 'perversion' (6). Utz refers to himself as 'the most useless of refugees, an aesthete' (24). Yet through Utz's voice, Chatwin also makes a straightfaced case in favour of the impulse to hoard: '[t]he collector's enemy is the museum curator [...] In any museum the object dies—of suffocation and the public gaze—whereas private ownership confers on the owner the right and the need to touch' (6).

As Chatwin's narrator effaces himself (the text's Chinese-box structure is less elaborate than that of *Summer in Baden-Baden*; Chatwin's novella is, undoubtedly, first and foremost the story of Kaspar Utz) to give centre-stage to his scholar anti-hero, Utz's pursuit of 'pieces' (5) as the 'antidote to decay' (38) takes on a distinctly figurative quality. This is particularly the case when Utz gives (apparently in the 1980) an account of his visit to the French spa of Vichy three decades earlier.

As he tells it, Utz was prescribed the water cure for a depression that his Czech doctor attributed—a nod here from Chatwin to the relentless scientism, verging on superstition, of orthodox Marxism—to a 'malfunctioning of the liver' (20). Granted an exit visa on condition that he undertake 'not to spread malicious propaganda against the People's Republic' (21), he found himself recuperating at a spa much closer in spirit to Ford's *surveillant* and latently sadistic Bad Nauheim than to Thackeray's 'gay, wicked' Rougetnoirbourg:

[Utz] did not appreciate the gerontophile glint of the masseur—'a very disturbed young man!'—and hoped that perhaps he was too young. Nor did he care for the ladies of the Grand Etablissement Thermal: disciplinarian ladies in white coats and gloves who

introduced him to the use of 'les instruments de torture'—remedial machines that Kafka [would] have appreciated—so that he found himself being strapped to a saddle and pummelled, gently but firmly in the intestines, with a pair of leather boxing-gloves.

(24)

Utz laments the kitsch commercial instincts that compel the proprietors of this very modern hydrotherapeutic facility to offer him a room filled with 'reproduction Louis Seize furniture, painted grey' (23). But a comparable crowding of contemporary horizons by dimly generalized visions of the past also informs Utz's own expectations of Vichy:

[he] had an idea, derived from Russian novels or his parents' love affair at Marienbad, that a spa-town was a place where the unexpected invariably happened [...]Two lonely people, brought thither by the accidents of ill-health or unhappiness, would cross paths on their afternoon walk. Their eyes would meet over a bed of municipal marigolds [...]Either the affair would end in a sad farewell [...]Or, when parting seemed inevitable, they would take the drastic decision that would bind them for the rest of their lives.

(25)

'Russian novels or his parents' love affair at Marienbad': Utz's discursively derived sense of the spa as a place fostering doomed or illicit erotic scenarios collocates personal-patrimonial and cultural-textual modalities of memory. In its reliance on foreign literary models and willing elision of the difference between Vichy and Marienbad—going to Swiss Baden, we recall, summoned for Herman Hesse in the 1920s images more logically associable with Baden-Baden and Bad Homburg—it is also a decidedly cosmopolitan, not to say u-topian (as in no-place, or any place) construction.

Being an intellectual helps make Utz a more lucid dreamer: he recognizes and even cultivates ('municipal marigolds') the anachronistic quality of his

expectations. But such self-consciousness does not lessen his immersion in topographic fantasy—or endow his projections with any special precision or erudition. We might conclude from his invocation of the (culturally prestigious) ‘Russian novel’—presumably the weighty triad Tolstoi-Dostoevskii-Turgenev—that Utz hopes to live out at Vichy the dramatic conventions of the nineteenth-century’s watering-place text. But—and just as Hesse’s memory of the ‘handsome flushed gambler’s faces of [...] Turgenev’ is faulty in the sense that Turgenev never wrote such a gambling scene—no canonical Russian novelist writes about Vichy. Nor do the somewhat maudlin plotlines Utz summons for the spa recall Russian novels set at other European resorts. Turgenev’s *Smoke* and *Spring Torrents* (*Veshnye vody*, 1872)—both of whose spa plots have their share of lonely people and drastic decisions—might fit the bill at a stretch; but Utz is probably channeling the minor-key melancholia of Chekhov’s story ‘The Lady with the Little Dog’ (*Dama s sobachkoi*, 1899), set at Yalta, a domestic health resort with sanatoria but no spring waters. It is in the skittish and restive nature of the process of mental image-making to blend likenesses, to vacillate between minutiae and broad strokes—and, generally, to order the disparate ‘pieces’ that combine to produce our sense of things with a disregard for the scholarly imperative of contextualization.

Not that fantasy—and its prerequisite, memory—do not imply an active, conscious work of bricolage; they do—with the libido a key driving force. Recounting his expectations of Vichy, Utz directly links the labour of the imagination with the vocation of collectorship:

But where was she, this elusive female who would fall into his arms? ‘Fall’—that was the operative word! Fall, without his having to pursue her. He was tired of pursuing precious objects. [...] Was she the steel-haired American, widowed or divorced he decided, obviously at Vichy for beauty treatment? Intelligent, of course, but not sympathetic. He mistrusted the acerbic tone with which she ordered her Manhattans from the barman.

(25)

Problems of tone—compounded, perhaps, by a too-modern cocktail—rule the above candidate out. But, as Utz tells it, after much condensation and correction, he finally brought a passably singular, plausible love-object into view:

a tall, white-limbed woman in tennis whites, her dark hair plaited in a coif, slipping a cover over her racquet and thanking, in a tone of firm finality, the over-eager pro for his lesson [...] Utz heard her conversing in French, although he thought—or was he imagining this?—that he detected a Slavic resonance in her accent. She was not the athletic type: there was an oriental torpor in her movements. She might have been Turkish, this ‘femme en forme de violon’ with her apple-blossom cheeks, her dimples, her quivering forelip and slanting green eyes. She wasn't beautiful by modern standards: the kind of woman they once bred for the seraglio. “But she has to be Russian,” he reflected. “Russian, certainly. With a touch of Tartar?”

(26)

Yet although he does not acknowledge it himself, Utz's imagined Vichy lover is a pastiche straining at the seams. His—and Chatwin's—sources for her, moreover, seem as much modernist and surface-visual as they are textual and realist-psychological. For me the above description evokes both Man Ray's 1924 photograph *Le Violon d'Ingres* and Lea Massari playing tennis at an unnamed French health resort in Louis Malle's film *Le souffle au coeur* (*A Murmur of the Heart*, 1971) and Chatwin may well be drawing on one or both of these. (The latter association would clearly have been inaccessible to Utz during his Vichy in the 1950s, but Malle's film is set in the early part of that decade and Utz's story is in any event recounted to the narrator in the 1980s. Part of Chatwin's point is that the ‘sources’ for our self-narratives—and, indeed, our narratives of our self-narratives—frequently defy conventional temporal logic; or, the imagination being a collage-like construction, are not discrete ‘sources’ at all.) The object of Utz's desire also has a dog, like Anna in Chekhov's Yalta story. The clearest intertextual

reference here, however—‘Russian, certainly. With a touch of Tartar?’—is to the exotic, *jolie-laide* stylings of Clavdia Chauchat, adored by Hans Castorp in Thomas Mann’s (sanatorium-set) *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*, 1924).

In a pitch of ‘feverish excitement’ (25), Utz attempts to ‘realize’ his composite vision. The result is humiliation:

“Bonsoir, Madame!” Utz smiled, and was about to call “Maxi!” to the dog. The woman gave a start, and quickened her pace [...] At dinner, she passed his table and looked the other way [...] He saw her again in the morning, in the passenger seat of a silver sports car, her arms around the neck of the man at the wheel.

(26)

On one level—and Druzhinin’s ‘Russian Circassian’ and Howells’ *An Open-Eyed Conspiracy* (see Chapter 1) remind us that such disappointment is by no means an exclusively postmodern phenomenon—Chatwin’s interest is satirical. *Utz* makes tender and doubtless self-reflexive fun of the tendency of bookish men to live in the worlds they have read. But the second half of Chatwin’s text, in which the narrator no longer has the (deceased) Utz’s version of events as an anchor for his biographical re-telling, complicates the question of imaginative agency. Through conversations with Orlík and others, the narrator begins to doubt his subject’s self-presentation as a (somewhat pitiable, but harmless) dreamer and relic:

I cannot vouch for the authenticity of Utz’s title ‘baron’. Andreas von Raabe, a friend of mine who lives in Munich, assures me that the Utzes of Krondorf did marry, from time to time, into the minor German nobility. He cannot be certain if they were ever ennobled themselves [...] Nor, after my call on Dr Frankfurter in New York, do I believe that Utz’s annual pilgrimage to the West was quite so ‘pure’. I must have been very naive to think the authorities would let him travel back and forth without a favour in return [...] I now suspect that the safe-deposit in the Union de Banques Suisses in Geneva was an unofficial shop—with a Mr Utz in charge—through which confiscated works of art were sold.

(46)

Other people's stories, like the first-person narratives they help knit together, can function as *cover* stories, protectively veiling as well as infringing upon the self. (We are perhaps especially entitled to draw this conclusion from a text the identity of whose narrator remains undelineated throughout.) The self-ironizing tale Utz tells about the stories he told himself at Marienbad seems by the end of the text more likely to be evidence of a careful narrative pragmatism on the teller's part than of naïvety. Did Utz, realizing that dainty and fastidious ethical conduct could no more protect his porcelain in Gottwald-era Prague than his half-remembered cure stories could be reconciled with the actually-existing resort culture of Fifth Republic France, sell himself to the Czechoslovak authorities as a fence? Were his healthful trips to Vichy really commercial visits to Geneva? If so, his claim of infatuation with the anachronistic tenderness of (what he takes to be) the nineteenth-century's watering-place text can instead be read as an act of embroidery—an alibi for calculated intent. (In this reading *Utz* would at last display real fealty to the conventions of the nineteenth-century's watering-place text by revealing its narrator's cure for depression, as well as his love of fictionally inscribed female types, to be a self-serving sham.) Both the aestheticization of personal experience and the assembly of the self from fragments of other people's narratives come naturally to the post-Romantic imagination, but, as Chatwin's short novel suggests, it does scant justice to the resourcefulness of the collector to insist upon the helplessness of the condition.

#### Scholarship as Symptom and Cure: Sebald's *Austerlitz*

About two-thirds of the way through W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), the title character recounts a visit to the Bohemian resort of Marienbad in the company of a friend, Marie de Verneuil, who, he recalls, was at that time conducting research into the spas of Europe. Marie, Jacques Austerlitz remembers years later, invited him to Marienbad not only as a fellow architectural historian, but also as part of an effort to rescue him from a 'self-inflicted isolation' (*Vereinzelung*) into which he had slipped, for reasons which at this point in Sebald's text remain undisclosed,



in early middle age. By the time of the pair's visit, dated by Austerlitz to the late summer of 1972, Marienbad's heyday was long over and its bathing establishments had been nationalized by the socialist republic of Czechoslovakia. Conversely, Marie's focus as a scholar was upon reconstructing the material and medico-social fabric of the nineteenth-century European watering place. As she recounts (or, more properly—Sebald can lull us into forgetfulness of such details—as *Austerlitz recalls her account*):

In 1873 the great cast-iron colonnade was built, and by now Marienbad was one of the most fashionable European resorts. Marie claimed—and here, said Austerlitz, she launched, with her strong sense of the comical, into a positive verbal coloratura of medical and diagnostic terms—Marie claimed that the mineral waters and particularly the so-called Auschowitz Springs had gained a great reputation for curing the obesity then so common among the middle classes, as well as digestive disturbances, sluggishness of the intestinal canal and other stoppages of the lower abdomen, irregular menstruation, cirrhosis of the liver, disorders of bile secretion, gout, hypochondriacal spleen, diseases of the kidney, the bladder and the urinary system, glandular swellings and scrofulous deformities, not to mention [...].

[1873 wurde die große gußeiserne Kolonnade errichtet, und Marienbad gehörte nun zu den gesellschaftsfähigsten unter den europäischen Bädern. Von den Mineralbrunnen und den sogenannten Auschowitz Quellen behauptete Marie—und hier, sagte Austerlitz, steigerte sie sich mit dem ihr eigenen Sinn für alles ins Komische überzogene in eine regelrechte medizinisch-diagnostische Wortkoloratur hinein—, daß sie sich besonders empfohlen hätten bei der in der Bürgerklasse damals weit verbreiteten Fettleibigkeit, bei Unreinigkeiten des Magens, Trägheit, des Darmkanals und anderen Stockungen des Unterleibs, bei Unregelmäßigkeiten der Menstruation, Verhärtungen der Leber, Störungen der Gallenabsonderung, gichtischen Leiden, Milzhypochondrie, Krankheiten der Nieren, Blase und der Urinwerkzeuge, Drüsengeschwüren und Verformungen skrofulöser Art, aber auch bei [...]].<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003), pp. 295-96. English translation by Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 303. Further references in parenthesis, with the German page number followed by the English.

Marie's list, which mimics the catalogues of 'symptoms alleviated' produced by many Continental spa resorts during what might be called spa culture's 'medical turn' after the *Spielverbot* of 1872, is too long to quote in full. Her talent for 'verbal coloratura', meanwhile, is one that Austerlitz (and/or the narrator, and/or the author, the supple folding of voice into voice that characterizes Sebald's text making narrative style difficult to attribute) shares: Marie's surname, suitably in a text whose principal themes are time and memory, is Proustian—the Normandy town of Verneuil-sur-Avre is referenced in *Du côté de chez Swann*; while mention of the Auschowitz (Ušovice; see also 'Austerlitz') spring at Marienbad hints, paronomasically, at the Holocaust experience that is the novel's submerged cardinal theme.

Austerlitz further recalls feeling that he, like the obese nineteenth-century bourgeoisie invoked by Marie, had come to Marienbad in order to be healed. The cure for his 'self-isolation', it appears, involved a concatenation of the academic and the erotic:

The rare sense of happiness that I felt as I listened to my companion talking, said Austerlitz, paradoxically gave me the idea that I myself, like the guests staying at Marienbad a hundred years ago, had contracted an insidious illness, and together with the idea came the hope that I was now beginning to be cured. Indeed, I had never in my life passed over the threshold into sleep more securely than on that first night I spent with Marie.

[Aus dem seltenen Glücksgefühl, das sich in mir regte, während ich meiner Erzählerin zuhörte, sagte Austerlitz, kam mir paradoxerweise der Gedanke, daß auch ich, nicht anders als die vor hundert Jahren in Marienbad sich aufhaltenden Gäste, von einer schleichenden Krankheit befallen war, ein Gedanke, der sich verband mit der Hoffnung, ich stünde nun am Beginn meiner Genesung. Tatsächlich bin ich nie zuvor in meinem Leben besser eingeschlafen als in dieser ersten mit Marie gemeinsam verbrachten Nacht.]

(296-7; 304-5)

Listening to Marie's erudite account, which reanimates the procedural minutiae and discursive textures of imperial spa culture, felt *heimlich*, Austerlitz remembers; sleeping with her exerted a similarly soothing effect. Less congenial, however, was the mnemonic loosening occasioned by the therapeutic imperative to relax:

I do not now recall in detail how we spent those few days in Marienbad, said Austerlitz. I know that I often lay for hours in the bubbling mineral baths and the rest rooms, which did me good in one way but in another may have weakened the resistance I had put up for so many years against the emergence of memory.

[Es ist mir heute unmöglich, im einzelnen zurückzurufen, wie wir die paar Tage in Marienbad verbracht haben, sagte Austerlitz. Ich bin oft stundenlang in den Sprudelbädern und in den Ruhekabinen gelegen, was mir einerseits wohlgetan, andererseits aber vielleicht meinen seit so vielen Jahren aufrechterhaltenen Widerstand gegen das Aufkommen der Erinnerung geschwächt hat.]

(300-301; 308)

For Utz—or so, at least, Chatwin's hero tells it—'lived' watering-place experience is crowded upon from all sides by second-order images derived from classic narrative. For Austerlitz, by contrast, immersion in other people's narratives, and especially narratives from a comfortably remote past, offers a kind of imbricated, depersonalized security; and it is *leaving* the logocentric domain of scholarship for the embodied, monadic and non-discursive modality of experience symbolized by physical submersion that threatens, in a punning figure, to defrost the 'pool of frozen water' ('zugefrorener Teich') that Sebald's protagonist has made of his memory (303; 311). It later transpires that, in 1938, when Austerlitz was four years old, his Jewish family took their final holiday at Marienbad, an event both history and Austerlitz's own reluctance to remember have conspired to repress (though he recalls feeling throughout his childhood with adoptive parents in North Wales that 'something very obvious, very manifest in itself [was] hidden from me' ('etwas sehr Naheliegendes, an sich Offenbares sei mir verborgen') (76; 84)).

Historical narrative serves a crucial but ambivalent function in Sebald's text. To tell, conscientiously and vividly, of a past beyond memory is to commit an act of retrieval—even of near-literal resurrection—but can also be an act of resistance to other, less tractable modes of recall. Like Chatwin's Utz (but more literally since he escaped the Holocaust on a *Kindertransport*) Jacques Austerlitz is a refugee in scholarship, for whom formalized knowledge represents a reassuring but isolating *cordon sanitaire*.

The narrative over which Austerlitz's voice just about presides is, like the text of Tsytkin's *Summer in Baden-Baden*, sinuous and un-endstopped but never agitated or imprecise. Sebald's style in all four of his novels is, in his own account, a tribute to the complex cadences and compulsive hypotaxis of nineteenth-century German-language prose, with influences including writers like Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868) and Gottfried Keller (1819-1890). One characteristic of this kind of expository edifice, which Sebald contrasted with the plot-driven 'mechanisms of the novel', is that, aggregating codicils and subclauses, it can appear so byzantine as to hold affect at bay.<sup>54</sup> The inexhaustible labour of ramification and subclassification confers safety: 'Someone, [Austerlitz] added, ought to draw up a catalogue of types of buildings, listed in order of size' ('Man müsste einmal, sagte er noch, einen Katalog unserer Bauwerker erstellen, in dem sie ihrer Gröser nach verzeichnet wären [...]') (23; 31); Sebald's narrative throws up esoterica like a palisade.

Scholarship, then, can be a defence against and a proxy for personal memory. As the narrator observes, for Jacques Austerlitz, 'the passing on of his knowledge seemed to become a gradual approach to a kind of historical metaphysics, bringing remembered events back to life' ('die erzählerische Vermittlung seiner Sachkenntnisse die schrittweise Annäherung an eine Art Metaphysik der Geschichte gewesen ist, in der das Erinnernte noch einmal lebendig [...]') (14; 22-23). Yet, as is the danger with any metaphysics, Austerlitz's dogma of erudition tends toward an abstraction of the self.

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<sup>54</sup> See Sebald, 'Sebald on Bookworm', Radio interview with Michael Silverblatt, *KCRW*, 6 December, 2001, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSFcTWIg-Pg>> [accessed 19 August 2014].

Sebald's text, and not only the parts narrated by Austerlitz, can at times read like a lecture ('if we study the development of fortifications from Floriani, da Capri and San Micheli, by way of Rusenstein, Burgsdorff, Coehoorn and Klengel [...]') ('Studiere man die Entwicklung des Festungsbaus von Floriani, da Capri und San Micheli über Rusenstein, Burgsdorf, Coehoorn und Klengel [...]') (17; 25)—or rather a euphuistic parody of a lecture in which book-learning is mined for verbal effect rather than semantic sense. The unlabeled photographs that supplement Sebald's narrative—and whose ambiguous relationship to the words that surround them have often dominated criticism of the novel—might thus be read as lecture slides, bearing the same tendentious and overbearing relation to historical truth that holiday photos bear to family life.

If Jacques Austerlitz immures himself readily in other people's narratives, the novel that bears his name also registers, not least formally, the possibility that he may have no other choice. Like Tsygkin, Sebald writes in run-on sentences and paragraphs and does not signpost his narrative through the conventional use of proper nouns and quotation marks. As in *Summer in Baden-Baden*, an important consequence of this technique is the regular confusion of identity. As the narrator gets closer to the enfolded story of Austerlitz's trauma—a story which Austerlitz himself has derived largely from others—the twists and turns of mediation often render it difficult to tell where one voice ends and another begins. Narrative transitions (initially signaled by such locutions as 'said Austerlitz' ('sagte Austerlitz') (12: 20) 'Austerlitz continued' (fuhr Austerlitz fort') (63; 71) are marked with diminishing clarity. Moreover, as has frequently been observed, Austerlitz and the narrator tend to blur together, the former's 'withdrawal into myself which became increasingly morbid and intractable with the passing of time' (meiner im Laufer der Zeit immer krankhafter werdenden Verschließung in mich selber') (165; 173) echoing the latter's struggle with 'uneasy thoughts' ('unguten Gedanken') (2; 10) and the fugues upon which he embarks for 'reasons never entirely clear to me' ('mir selber nicht recht erfindlichen Gründen') (1; 9).

The following epistemological pronouncement—which it is possible to read as a displaced epigraph for the novel—thus belongs either (it is difficult to tell) to Austerlitz or to his pedagogical mentor André Hilary:

All of us, even when we think we have noted every tiny detail, resort to set pieces which have already been staged often enough by others. We try to reproduce the reality, but the harder we try, the more we find the pictures that make up the stock-in-trade of the spectacle of history forcing themselves on us [...].

[Wir alle, auch diejenigen, die meinen, selbst auf das Geringfügigste geachtet zu haben, behelfen uns nur mit Versatzstücken, die von anderen schon oft genug auf der Bühne herumgeschoben worden sind. Wir versuchen, die Wirklichkeit wiederzugeben, aber je angestrenzter wir es versuchen, desto mehr drängt sich uns das auf, was auf dem historischen Theater von jeher zu sehen war [...]].

(101; 109)

Sebald illustrates indirectly the philosophical case against the possibility of an autonomous narrative subjectivity early in the novel, when his narrator recounts a visit he made in the late 1960s to the Nocturama at Antwerp Zoo:

I cannot remember exactly what creatures I saw [...] but there were probably bats and jerboas from Egypt and the Gobi Desert, native European hedgehogs and owls, Australian opossums, pine martens, dormice and lemurs, leaping from branch to branch, darting back and forth over the greyish-yellow sandy ground, or disappearing into a bamboo thicket.

[Ich weiß nicht mehr genau, was für Tiere ich [...] gesehen habe. Wahrscheinlich waren es Fleder- und Springmäuse aus Ägypten oder aus der Wüste Gobi, heimische Igel, Uhus und Eulen, australische Beutelmäuse, Baumratten, Siebenschläfer und Halbaffen, die da von einem Ast zum anderen sprangen, auf dem graugelben Sandboden hin und her huschten oder gerade in einem Bambusdickicht verschwanden.]

(2; 10)

The above passage highlights—with the help of the giveaway adverb ‘probably’—memory’s collocation of the seen and the discursively derived. Sebald’s narrator overplays his bookish hand, thus diminishing the *echt*ness of the scenario.

(Competent readers understand that storytellers mix lived experience and research—and fantasy and hearsay—all the time, but remain inclined to see stitch-concealment—a species of repression—as a marker of narrative excellence.)

An eerie sense of interconnectedness—the feeling of it being a small world after all, intertextually speaking—can pursue discussions of modern experience’s saturation with second-order images. Jacques Austerlitz is first described in Sebald’s novel as a man ‘with fair, curiously wavy hair of a kind I had seen elsewhere only on the German hero Siegfried in Fritz Lang’s *Nibelungen* film’ (‘mit blondem, seltsam gewelltem Haar, wie ich es sonst nur gesehen habe an dem deutschen Helden Siegfried in Langs Nibelungenfilm’; 6; 14). This comparison, more conventional than Tsyppkin’s association of the dead Dostoevskii with an old man on a Soviet trolleybus, returns the present discussion to the Drachenfels, the scene of Siegfried’s slaying of the dragon, and so to Thackeray (and so to Byron); while, as Martin Klebes has noticed, the Marienbad passages of *Austerlitz* conjure not only scholarly-historical discourse but also Jean Paul’s *Dr Katzenbergers Badereise* and Resnais’s *Last Year in Marienbad*.

All three of the texts here discussed—*Summer in Baden-Baden*, *Utz* and *Austerlitz*—speak to the simultaneous uncanniness and consolation of what Julia Kristeva characterizes in her pathbreaking work on intertextuality as writing’s unshakeable ‘vertical’ orientation toward an ‘anterior corpus’. But Sebald’s text in particular has a feel for the paradoxes at issue, representing scholarship, which can present itself as the clarifying antidote to a passive enmeshment in other people’s words, as a domain offering as much scope for getting lost (itself a kind of imprisonment) as any exercise in automatic writing or imaginative free play. ‘Scientific’ discourse, a simultaneously mercurial and monomaniacal quantity, can be a symptom of—rather than a corrective to—the wandering and skirting to which the mind inclines.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Martin Klebes, ‘If You Come to a Spa: Displacing the Cure in *Schwindel. Gefühle.* and *Austerlitz*’, in *The Undiscover’d Country: W.G. Sebald and the Poetics of Travel*, ed. by Markus Zisselsberger (Rochester: Camden House, 2010), pp. 123–41. (p. 127). Klebes also discusses a chapter in Sebald’s novel *Schwindel. Gefühle* (*Vertigo*, 1990), in which he finds allusions to Jean Paul’s spa novel and Kafka’s 1913 trip to the Italian spa of Riva.

## Conclusions: The Work of Two

“How many eggs are eaten in Baden every morning before ten o'clock?” asks Glencora Palliser of her husband in *Can You Forgive Her?* (III; 288). By the 1860s the question might have seemed only just rhetorical. The cultural power of guide books and novels had helped write Baden-Baden in particular into a fairly intimate familiarity—this in period in which any journey of hermeneutic discovery was more likely than ever before to be a chaperoned one, the stops clearly marked clearly in advance.

Hypermediation—the guarantor of the dimly cumulative topo-graphic and topic-making processes whereby Baden-Baden’s gambling salons become, as they are in Trollope’s novel, ‘those gambling salons’ (III: 209)—does not imply the dematerialization or de-individuation of watering-place experience. Rather, as I have attempted to show in this chapter, it sets in train an uncanny interfusion (or interweaving, to do etymological justice to ‘text’) of past and present—and textual and experiential planes.<sup>56</sup>

The Russian scholar Tat’iana Mozzhukhina, drawing on Toporov’s theory of the ‘single St. Petersburg text’ and Iurii Lotman’s influential conception of cultures as composed of mutually interpenetrating semiotic ‘layers’ (‘plasty’), has characterized the modern discursive identity of the Russian *domestic* watering place as the product of a ‘vertical dialogue’ (‘vertikal’nyi dialog’) between spa narratives written over two centuries.<sup>57</sup> In this figuration, Piatigorsk’s resonance in contemporary Russian culture amounts to a kind of negotiated compromise, according to which works as different as Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time* and Il’ia Il’f and Evgenii Petrov’s Soviet-era satire *The Twelve Chairs* (*Dvenadtsat’ stol’ev*, 1928), also set partly at the Caucasian resort, are accorded proportional topo-graphic rights. Mozzhukhina’s idea of discursive identity as enacting a ‘simultaneous

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<sup>56</sup> On the etymology of ‘text’, see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 13.

<sup>57</sup> T.V. Mozzhukhina, ‘Kul’tura povsednevnosti: podkhody i metody izucheniia <watering place>’ in *‘Watering place’ v diskursivnykh praktikakh sotsiogumanitarnogo znaniia: materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, Piatigorsk, 27-19 apreliia 2007 goda*, ed. by T.A. Bulygina et al. (Piatigorsk: Russian Society of Intellectual History, 2007), pp. 11-19 (p. 11).



presencing of the cultures of different periods' ('odnovremennost' raznovremennykh kul'tur') echoes Thomas Pavel's geological figuration of intertextuality:

[L]ike bedrock, texts amalgamate strata of diverse geological origins [...] It is the task of enlightened analysis to reflect [...] on the deeply ingrained semantic heterogeneity of texts, on the principle of dispersion embedded in them [and on there being] no guarantee that all sentences of the text can be traced back to one and the same world.<sup>58</sup>

Pavel and Mozzhukhina's conceptualizations are illuminating and ingenious. But the evidence of this chapter suggests that neither geology nor diplomacy represents the choicest source of metaphor for how the image of a place is wrought out of the mutually formative interactions between individual consciousnesses and a generalized cultural imaginary. John Murray's resurrection of the brothers Bénazet and Jacques Austerlitz's sense of memory defrosted in hot spring water speak to a more vaporous, insidious kind of coming together.

Anachronism, or the collapsing of multiple plots and temporalities into a single, sempiternal narrative frame is a problem in guide books, but, as Tsypkin, Chatwin and Sebald's spa texts attest, can be productive in fictions. Yet unconsidered mixing can have disastrous aesthetic consequences too: Robert Siodmak's Hollywood film *The Great Sinner* (1949), starring Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner and co-written by Christopher Isherwood, is set at Wiesbaden and combines elements from *The Gambler*, Dostoevskii's biography and (for good measure) *Crime and Punishment*. Acknowledging the failure of the film's cocktail of sources, Isherwood cited creative differences with his co-writer Ladislav Fodor: 'You see, [the producers] have this unfortunate idea that two people will write a script, and that they will both have ideas and that then you will somehow

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 71. In its turn, Pavel's account echoes Freud's archaeological figuration of the psyche in *Civilization and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, 1930).

amalgamate the ideas'.<sup>59</sup> Isherwood was speaking practically, but the idea of a script (or text) as the amalgamated (and often vexed) work of two also figures the delicate *pas de deux* that individual literary topo-graphies are compelled to dance with the more spectral image of place bequeathed them by representational tradition.

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<sup>59</sup> See *Conversations with Christopher Isherwood*, ed. by James J. Berg and Chris Freeman (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), p. 48.

## **Chapter 5**

**‘A Pleasant Reunion of All Nations’: The Transnational Spa**

“Mamma,” said little Walter, when they were sitting together one morning in the bare, half-furnished *salon*, which this time was at Baden-Baden [...] “Mamma, is not England home?”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oliphant, *Agnes*, 2, p. 126.

For Charles Lever's narrator Arthur O'Leary in the 1840s, resorts dangle the promise of a candid cross-cultural colloquy. O' Leary has high hopes for one locus in particular, the *table d'hôte*, figured as

[a] pleasant reunion of all nations, from Stockholm to Stamboul [...] all pell-mell, seated side by side, and actually shuffled into momentary intimacy by soup, fish, fowl, and entremets [...] The very fact that you are *en route* gives a frankness and a freedom to all you say [...].<sup>2</sup>

This common table, at once redolent of the Eucharist and the convivial village scenes of Teniers and Breughel, offers itself as a redemptive mirror image of Lever's '*table-monstre*'. In furnishing a space for 'frankness and freedom', Lever's *table d'hôte* also suggests to the modern reader Bakhtin's utopian celebration, in *Rabelais and His World*, of medieval popular feasts—and especially their provision of a 'temporary liberation from the prevailing truth'.<sup>3</sup> Yet Arthur O' Leary's encomium ends on a sobering note. Despite having travelled 'in every quarter and region', he 'would have considerable difficulty in enumerating even six [*tables d'hôte*] such as fairly to warrant the praise I have pronounced'.

Later in the novel, moreover, O' Leary appears to take back the compliment. *Tables d'hôte* may promote frankness and wholesome *amor mundi*, but Continental watering places on the whole are

depots of continental vice, the licensed bazaars of foreign iniquity, the sanctuary of the outlaw, the home of the swindler, the last resource of the ruined debauchee, the one spot of earth beneath the feet of the banished defaulter. They are the parliaments of European blackguardism, to which Paris contributes her *escrocs*, England her 'legs' from Newmarket and Doncaster, and Poland her refugee counts—victims of Russian cruelty and barbarity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Arthur O' Leary*, 1, p. 281-282.

<sup>3</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984) pp. 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> *Arthur O' Leary*, 3, p. 69.

This chapter suggests that the Continental watering place, which might in principle constitute ideal ground for a cosmopolitan aesthetics, consistently disappoints such expectations in narrative practice. I first show how, rather than furthering an interest in transcultural identification and polyglot horizontal exchange, fiction set at the spa frequently registers, and sometimes fosters, exclusionary discourses—and a resistance to dialogue across the barricades put up by language and national feeling. The paradoxical (and reactionary) parochiality of the nineteenth century's (transnational) watering place text is encapsulated in the tendency of post-1850 spa narratives to represent resorts like Baden-Baden as reflective rather than dynamic loci: microcosms modeling the (stable) social structures of a given *patria* rather than (to use the term Lever applies to the *table d'hôte* but gleans from the *rouge-et-noir* table) sites of 'shuffling' As I then suggest, where fiction writers do narrate encounters with foreigners at the spa, it is more often the spirit of appraisal than exchange that prevails—with such texts frequently fortifying essentialist discourses on nationality and character.

### Looking, Not Talking: The Sectarian Spa

'Innumerable groups, seated and strolling, made the place a gigantic *conversazione*', remarks Henry James's narrator of Bad Homburg in *Confidence* (1880).<sup>5</sup> In populating Homburg with East Coast Brahmins (a solitary Englishman, Captain Lovelock, is also introduced, chiefly—in the assessment of the James scholar Herbert Ruhm—'to dramatize the appeal of Blanche Evers'), James's novel hardly enacts the claim at a diegetic level, but the dialogic figure is nonetheless a suggestive one.<sup>6</sup>

Fiction itself could be aptly characterized as the venue for a gigantic *conversazione*. (In Italian the word describes 'an evening assembly for conversation, social recreation, and amusement'; in English it has been 'chiefly applied to assemblies of an intellectual character'.)<sup>7</sup> As Margaret Cohen reminds

<sup>5</sup> *Confidence*, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> See Ruhm, 'Editor's Note' in *Confidence*, pp. 1-3 (p. 3).

<sup>7</sup> "conversazione, n." *OED Online*, <www.oed.com> [accessed 6 August 2014].

us, '[o]ne tenet of Marxist explanations for the cultural power of novels is that they offer imaginary solutions to real life problems at the level of real social relations'—and it is doubtful whether there exist many more compelling real life problems than the problem of real social relations.<sup>8</sup> Among fiction's primary ethical functions is to dramatize, whether in pursuit of a solution or with an eye to complicating matters, intersubjective relations: the world-making dialectic of self and Other.

Historicizing this conviction, we might conclude that in an era of rapidly arming, anxiously self-differentiating nation states cast by dint of technology and commerce into an unprecedented degree of mutual implication—'[c]apital', writes Mill in a much-cited line from *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), 'is becoming more and more cosmopolitan'—the question of how to be with the *national* other should be a cardinal one in fiction, with international resorts likely settings in which to work through the hitches.<sup>9</sup>

The Continental spa thus looks like a fairly ideal spatial figure through which to take the measure of the nineteenth century's transnational preoccupations. Where better to trial the fate in the age of the nation state of the Enlightenment ideal of a borderless cosmopolitanism based on an appeal to shared humanity and non-territorial community than in a circumscribed space close to the geographical centre of Europe and distinguished both by its proscription of the distractions of work and by the apparent heterogeneity of its social composition? Spas, defined (commercially and imaginatively) by their visitorship even to the point of appearing to lack a native populace, seem also to transcend the dynamic of largesse and supplication that can dominate relations between host and guest. All told, watering places might be expected to foster (or point up the impossibility of inculcating) the feeling of 'double citizenship' (of both one's country of birth and of the world) essential to Kant's utopian vision of a 'universal moral community'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> See Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, 2 vols (London: John W. Parker, 1848), 2, p. 111.

<sup>10</sup> Kant's cosmopolitan theory is outlined across works including 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' (1784), 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' (1795), and *The Metaphysics*

Pre-1871 German resorts in particular, yet unswallowed by the nation state and appealing to French as a *lingua franca*, can look like proto-Bhabhan cultural interstices—venues for reflection on the fundamental hybridity of identity—or prototypical Derridean *villes franches*.<sup>11</sup> Disraeli's sense, in *Vivian Grey*, of Bad Ems in the 1820s as 'a place almost of unique character [...] with every convenience, luxury, and accommodation; and yet without shops, streets, or houses'; and Violet Hunt's description of watering places as 'towns without personality or civic character of any kind' (90) give the impression of the *Kurort* as a bare canvas, waiting to be imprinted from the outside with a worthwhile *imago civitatis*.<sup>12</sup>

The Continental spa is certainly an overlooked space in accounts of nineteenth-century transnationalism, offering a different kind of focus from Paris, whose social core was notoriously difficult to access as a foreigner, and from Florence and Rome, where the universalist ethos of Renaissance humanism weathered with difficulty political crises and the heavy cultural presence of wealthy American aesthetes. Reading modern Western culture as a semiotic constellation whose busiest intersections have engendered its most important transformations, Baden-Baden in particular ('the Boulevard of Europe', wrote the *New York Times* in 1857) seems to reproduce the necessary diversity of the polis while escaping its ties to the nation state, thus furnishing, in Galin Tihanov's terms, an important 'domain of articulation' for cosmopolitan discourses.<sup>13</sup> The frequency with which diplomatic congresses (from the 1714 Treaty of Baden, negotiated between France and the Holy Roman Empire at the eponymous Swiss resort, to the Spa Conference on reparations after the First World War) have been held at watering places certainly gestures in this direction—though the logging of

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*of Morals* (1797). For a concise discussion of the topic, see Garrett Wallace Brown, *Grounding Cosmopolitanism: From Kant to the Idea of a Cosmopolitan Constitution*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 5-8.

<sup>11</sup> See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) and Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Disraeli, *Vivian Grey*, ed. by Herbert Van Thal (London: Cassell, 1968), p. 172.

<sup>13</sup> See *New York Times*, 'Foreign Intelligence', p. 10; Galin Tihanov, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Discursive Landscape of Modernity: Two Enlightenment Articulations', in *Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism*, ed. by David Adams and Tihanov (London: Legenda, 2011), pp. 133-152 (p. 133).



elite visitors to spas on the ‘Foreign Intelligence’ pages of Victorian newspapers (British newspapers seem to have fixated particularly on the Baden-Baden exploits of Aleksandr Gorchakov, chancellor of the Russian empire from 1863) does not, seeming more in the spirit of Bismarck’s cunning Ems Telegram of 1870.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of literary and cultural paradigms, the nineteenth century’s watering-place text arrives between Romanticism, itself split between its enthusiasms for national cultural patrimony and a Goethean interest in ‘Weltliteratur’ (envisioned as, again in Tihanov’s terms, a ‘growing network of communication between writers and between readers and writers, a process rather than an accomplished ideal’), and a more ambivalent transnational modernism perhaps best exemplified by Thomas Mann.<sup>15</sup> But to read the waters as a *conversazione* or ‘pell-mell’ symposium—the legendary German-Jewish *salonnière* Rahel Varnhagen did, after all, hold court at Baden-Baden in the 1810s—might most of all be to appeal to the appetite for orality of postmodern philosophies of intersubjectivity influenced, often via Kristeva, by Bakhtin.<sup>16</sup> Luce Irigaray, for example, for whom ‘in a [meaningful] exchange between two, meaning quivers and always remains unstable, incomplete, unsettled, irreducible to the word’ (and for whom such quivering is the basis of a normative mode of sociability) can be imagined as approving of the intimate heteroglossia of Lever’s *table d’hôte*.<sup>17</sup>

Yet the idea of the spa as a dialogic space is in narrative practice something of a chimera in a nineteenth-century context. The era of the watering place’s rise to topic status accommodated innumerable shades of internationalist sensibility—

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<sup>14</sup> On spa conferences, see John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV, 1667-1714* (London: Longman, 1999), p. 358; Gerald D. Feldman, *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economy and Society in the German Inflation, 1914-1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 314. The Ems Telegram incident involved Bismarck rewriting the King of Prussia’s account of a Kurgarten meeting with the French ambassador in order to provoke France into declaring war. See Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 37).

<sup>15</sup> Tihanov, ‘Cosmopolitanism’, p. 142.

<sup>16</sup> On Varnhagen, see Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* (1958) (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> Irigaray, *Way of Love*, trans. by Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluhacek (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 28.

from Marx and Engels to George Eliot and Turgenev (both, in the final analysis, firm patriots). It also produced avowedly internationalist institutions (travel agencies, Great Exhibitions, spas). But, to invoke Benedict Anderson's influential concept, the 'imagined communities' that dominated intellectual life before the *fin de siècle* were nonetheless overwhelmingly national ones; and it was to the present and future prospects of such communities that the print culture of the period, with spa narratives no exception, most consistently appealed.<sup>18</sup>

The period between 1848—when Friedrich Hecker 'of the red republican tendencies, and the astounding wide-awake hat, particularly distinguished [...] by his iconoclastic animosity to Roulette and Rouge et Noir', led a revolt that nearly put an end to the Grand Duchy of Baden—and 1914 is well characterized as a period of reaction and imperial consolidation in Europe. (Alain Badiou indicts the period 1871-1914 on this charge, sparing the 1850s and 1860s for the sake of the Paris Commune; but, the rise of Marxism notwithstanding, the decades immediately after mid-century are strikingly barren of Kantian and Rousseauian idealist projects, in fiction as elsewhere).<sup>19</sup> International jamborees like the 1851 Exhibition at Crystal Palace are better read as cementing than challenging the imaginary hegemony of the territorial nation state, while travel and (health) tourism, it can equally be argued, were increasingly pragmatic practices, dedicated rather to the fashioning of subjectivities than to the forging of transnational contacts. 'Cosmopolitan', as Tanya Agathocleous acknowledges in a study that seeks to redeem the counterintuitive idea of a Victorian transnationalism, remained less than a term of endearment for many mid- and late-nineteenth-century writers, including Anthony Trollope, George Eliot and James.<sup>20</sup>

It is not that, in this context, spa fictions marginalize the question of contact with the national Other. Quite the contrary. But as I will go on to suggest, more often than they foster solidarity and feelings of interconnectedness—

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<sup>18</sup> See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> See Andrew Steinmetz, *The Gaming Table: Its Votaries and Victims*, 2 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1870), 1, p. 139; and Badiou, 'The Communist Hypothesis', *New Left Review*, 49, (2008), 29-42 (pp. 35-36).

<sup>20</sup> See Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 30.

Kristeva writes, perhaps a little wishfully, that '[l]iving with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of *being an other* [and] thus means to imagine and make oneself for the other'—Continental spas stage, in narratives of the 1860s especially, the *mutually evaluative ethnographies* of a whole corpus of fiction writers—from national chauvinists (Edmund Yates, Dostoevskii, Vasilii Avenarius) to convinced and conflicted cosmopolitans (Turgenev and James *inter alios*).<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, where relations with the *Kurort* other are not inimical, they are often distantiated to the point of voyeurism—the hallmark of metropolitan sociability in its least affirmative key. Here is Lidiia Veselitskaia's Mimi at Vichy in the 1890s:

The season was a brilliantly successful one. Strauss [see footnote] was at the waters, [the opera singer Adelina] Patti was there. There was an English statesman with his wife, an American magnate with his daughters and oh so many courtesans and aristocrats! Wonderful walks and horserides on the banks of the Allier, marvelous concerts and dance parties at the casino! Of course, Mimi didn't get to know anybody—watering-place society is so mixed, after all—but even from afar it was fun to look at other people's outfits, other people's scandals [...].<sup>22</sup>

[Сезон был из удачных, из блестящих. На водах был Штраус, была Патти, был английский государственный человек с женой, американский богач с дочерьми, а сколько кокоток, сколько аристократов! [..К]акие прогулки, какие кавалькады вечером по берегу Алье, какие концерты и танцевальные вечеринки в казино! Конечно, Мимочка ни с кем не знакомилась—общество на водах так смешано!—но и вчуже забавно было поглядеть на чужие туалеты, на чужие интриги [...]].<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> 'Strauss' probably refers to Johann *Sohn*, since Johann *Vater* died in 1849 and Richard's fame was only just beginning in the early 1890s. However, it is also possible that Veselitskaia/Mimi might be confused: one Isaac Strauss, unrelated to Richard or Johann but the great-grandfather of Claude Lévi-Strauss, was the director of the Vichy Orchestra from the 1840s until the 1860s, well before Mimi's time.

<sup>23</sup> Veselitskaia, *Mimochka*, p. 47.

Like Anthony Trollope and Joel Tyler Headley in their writing on spa gambling, Mimi registers oppositions ('oh so many courtesans and aristocrats') that slide toward becoming equivalences or mirror images. But Veselitskaia's young heroine also shares the ironic fate of many (especially female) middle- and upper-class visitors to watering places who were apparently deterred from enthusiastic entry into watering-place society by the spa's reputation (a source of reproach in some, patrician departments of print culture but increasingly *celebrated*, as the next chapter shows, in travel guide books) for social mixedness and an associated fogging or loosening of codes. In his 1870 essay 'Saratoga' James writes, parodically (and his target may well be writers like the *London Society* correspondent quoted in Chapter 2), that '[t]he good old times of Saratoga, I believe, as of the world in general, are rapidly passing away. The time was when it was the chosen resort of none but "nice people." At the present day, I hear it constantly affirmed, "the company is dreadfully mixed."'”<sup>24</sup>

A concomitant, of course, of not having a handle on the identity of your fellow spa guests (but having the leisure to speculate) is, of course, that they may well be wondering at length about you. 'Respectable women are compelled to shun an evening walk in the grounds behind the [Wiesbaden] *Cursaal*', wrote a correspondent of *The St. James's Magazine* in 1862, the implication being that to take such a walk would be to risk being taken for a prostitute.<sup>25</sup> Whatever particular concerns hold her back—and Veselitskaia does not elaborate—Mimi's enjoyment of the spa's glittering concatenation of difference is spectacular and vicarious; at Vichy, she and her mother cleave close to the other Russians.

(National) coterie not (transnational) community was by most accounts the Continental spa's defining mode of sociability. Though she was in fact complaining about the scarcity of accommodation, the American poet and travel writer Helen Hunt Jackson's remark in *Bits of Travel* (1872) that '[t]here can be nothing on earth like the problem of lodging at Bad Gastein in August, except jumping for life from cake to cake of ice in the Polar Sea' also offers a neat figure for the chilly territoriality of many non-fiction testimonies.

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<sup>24</sup> James, 'Saratoga', pp. 751-752.

<sup>25</sup> Unsigned, 'German Gambling Houses', *The St. James's Magazine*, July 1862, pp. 441-453 (p. 448).

*English* unclubbability abroad, and at spas in particular, was a popular self-stereotype in the 1860s and 1870s, as the following lament, published in *Chamber's Journal* and generalizing from observations made at Ems, suggests:

One cannot help being struck with the fact [...] that the English lose half the benefit of the complete change of ideas they might otherwise enjoy, if they could for the time leave behind them some of their intense insular respectability [...] no-one can help remarking the sort of wet blanket with which a number of English will envelope the *table d'hôte* of a hotel mostly occupied by foreigners.<sup>26</sup>

In 1867 the German novelist Theodor Fontane, author of *Effi Briest* (1894; and whose just-married heroine has a rash and unsatisfying affair with an army officer at the Baltic spa of Kessin) was involved in a polemic with the historian and social reformer Victor Aimé Huber on the subject of whether a deluge of Anglo-Saxon guests was ruining the atmosphere of 'good honest German guesthouses'. Wiesbaden, as if to forestall such difficulties, had its own, dedicated 'English Hotel', located at a convenient distance from the English church and 'highly recommended by the author of "Bubbles of the Brunnens of Nassau" and Murray's Handbook.'<sup>27</sup>

Even if, in truth, the market rather than nationality may well have been most significant arbiter of how space was used at nineteenth-century resorts, the apparent sectarianism of spa social life—its air of snippy contestation—lends weight to Georg Simmel's sense, in 'The Sociology of Space' (1903), of enforced proximity as sharpening interactions and producing 'decisive emotions' rather than necessarily fostering community feeling ('it is a very old observation that

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<sup>26</sup> Unsigned, 'Ems and Its Summer Visitors', *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art*, 28 June 1879, p. 403. Thackeray writes in *The Virginians* of 'a true British welcome of Curse you, who are you?'. See *The Virginians: A Tale of the Last Century*, 2 vols (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1858), 1, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> See Tihanov, 'Cosmopolitanism', p. 149-150, note 36; and, for the *Hotel D'Angleterre's* excellent recommendations, the advertisement section of *Bradshaw's Illustrated Notes for Travellers in Tyrol and Vorarlberg* (London: George Bradshaw, 1863), p. 66.

residents of the same building can only stand on a friendly or hostile footing [...] On the other hand [...] in the modern metropolis, complete indifference and the exclusion of all emotional reactions can occur even between next-door neighbours').<sup>28</sup> Spa culture, hybridizing urban(e) and more venerable modes of sociability, can sometimes seem to have produced the worst of both worlds.

#### 'England Turned Out For A Holiday': The Spa as *Patria* in Microcosm

With an eye to the spa as an exclusionary or cliquish locus—or as a transnational space that wasn't—it is instructive to compare Lever's 1844 vision of the *table d'hôte* with two later watering-place *mises en scène*. The first is Michael Angelo Titmarsh's 1851 description of Rougetnoirbourg:

There were judges and their wives, serjeants and their ladies, Queen's counsel learned in the law, the northern circuit and the western circuit—there were officers of half-pay and full pay, military officers, naval offices, and sheriff's officers. There were people of high fashion and rank, and people of no rank at all—there were men and women of reputation and of the two kinds of reputation—there were English boys playing cricket; English pointers putting up the German partridges, and English guns knocking them down—there were women whose husbands and men whose wives were at home—there was high church and low church—England turned out for a holiday, in a word.<sup>29</sup>

The second, of Baden-Baden, comes from Turgenev's *Smoke*, published in 1867:

[H]ere were almost all the *fine fleur* of our society [...] Here was Count X., our incomparable dilettante, a profoundly musical nature, who recites songs 'so divinely', but in fact cannot put two notes together without fumbling up and down the keys with his index finger [...] here was our enchanting Baron Z., that master in every line: literature, administration, oratory, and card-sharping. Here, too, was Prince Y., a friend of religion and the people, who, in that blissful epoch when the trade in spirits was a government

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<sup>28</sup> See 'The Sociology of Space', in *Simmel on Culture*, ed. by David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: SAGE, 1997), pp. 137-70 (p. 154).

<sup>29</sup> *The Kickleburys*, p. 44.

monopoly made himself a huge fortune by the sale of vodka adulterated with belladonna [...].

[[Т]ут была почти вся "fine fleur" нашего общества [...] Тут был граф Х., наш несравненный дилетант, глубокая музыкальная натура, который так божественно "сказывает" романсы, а в сущности, двух нот разобрать не может, не тыкая вкось и вкривь указательным пальцем по клавишам [...] тут был и наш восхитительный барон Z., этот мастер на все руки: и литератор, и администратор, и оратор, и шулер; тут был и князь Т., друг религии и народа, составивший себе во время оно, в блаженную эпоху откупа, громадное состояние продажей сивухи, подмешанной дурманом [...]].<sup>30</sup>

Thackeray and Turgenev, in their different ways two of the mid-nineteenth century's most cosmopolitan writers, both offer the Continental spa as first and above all a *national* exclave reproducing, in satirical microcosm, the social and moral structures of home. In the 'ancient novel of travel' as characterized by Bakhtin, '[the] sense of a native country [as] an organizing center for seeing and depicting [...] radically changes the entire picture of a foreign world'.<sup>31</sup> But Bakhtin has in mind how comparisons with the homeland provide the 'scale and background' against which 'alien countries and cultures' are judged and not what *The Kickleburys* and *Smoke* offer here: domestic manners and relations as the abiding thematic and the spa as a fairly blank proscenium.

Rougetnoirbourg is a knockabout and transgressive ('the two kinds of reputation' [...] 'men whose wives were at home') miniature England (albeit with the customary mid-century representational exclusions—working-class people who do not service the needs of upper-class men), somewhat in the spirit of the tableaux of George Cruikshank, a hero of Thackeray's. Through anaphora, syntactic parallelism, and suggestive oppositions (half/full, high/low, up/down), Mr. Titmarsh builds a rather binarizing but (within limits) textured picture of leisured English sociability; his 'people of no rank at all' attests, though this was

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<sup>30</sup> Turgenev, 'Dym' in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols (Nauka: Moscow, 1981), 7, pp. 209-407 (p. 250). Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>31</sup> See Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 103.

perhaps unnecessary by the 1850s, that travel to the Continent no longer simply meant the annual aristocratic transhumance.

Thackeray sets his Christmas book at high summer and the sportive air that hangs about the above scene is not only furnished by the cricketers and huntsmen. Ellen Wood's narrator in *East Lynne*, by contrast, offers a more elegiac image of the English at the waters, remarking, in introducing the (fictional) resort of Stalkenberg, that '[German spas] are generally crowded in [early autumn], now that the English flock abroad in shoals, like the swallows quitting our cold country [...] France has been pretty well used up, so now we fall upon Germany.'<sup>32</sup> For me, Wood's last figure also points at a certain instrumentality, and concomitant perfunctory treatment of the thing, in the way Victorian writers, she included, 'fall upon' the spa; and it is worth noting in this regard that the only natives on view in Thackeray's survey of the fauna of Rougetnoirbourg are German partridges.

Turgenev, too, makes Baden-Baden the backdrop for an *étude de mœurs* both sharply observed and strikingly limited in horizon. His withering thumbnail sketches of Russian notables at the waters (neither Count X., Prince Y. or Baron Z. appear again in the novel) touch on matters of topical concern (religion, administration, commercial corruption) but are for the most part a little too blandly conceived (bad singing, cheating at cards) truly to hit the mark as satire. Moreover, registering hypocrisy as a social universal dilutes the impact of the charge, as well as courting unpopularity (*Smoke* was badly received on both sides of Russia's ideological divide).

Indeed, *Smoke* stands out among Turgenev's novels for the ill-temperedness (and—perhaps concomitant—ineffectualness) of its portrayal of Russian high society—and for the fact that, despite being mostly set abroad, it *only* represents Russian high society. Both characters of a westernizing disposition, like the bumptious Bambaev and the overdressed crowd of 'Babettes', 'Zizis' and 'Zozos' whose function is to reproach Russian elites for their servile imitation of Parisian social (including nomenclatural) convention (251-252), and

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<sup>32</sup> *East Lynne*, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), 2, p. 261.



those of a more chauvinistic bent—like General Ratmirov—are made unattractive; indeed, the novel's dealings with some of its principal protagonists read like extended, marginally more balanced versions of the character *exposés* quoted above. Baden-Baden, moreover, fulfills a less dynamic function in the novel's polemical economy than might be anticipated: since all parties summer there, the spa setting catalyses their differences, promotes a certain freedom of discourse, but, in the absence of significant transnational contacts or a re-ordering of intranational relations, does not alter the terms of the argument.

*Smoke* is a highly self-conscious (Turgenev had himself settled at Baden-Baden in the early 1860s—see below) reflection on the moral (and often physical) peripherality of Russian elites in the decade following the Emancipation reforms of 1861. Despite its spa setting and strong thematic engagement with the question of Russia's place with respect to Western Europe, it is not, in any wholehearted sense, a work of transnational fiction (as, say, some of James's Europe-set fiction might be characterized as being), being perhaps, despite its genteel atmosphere, more comfortably read as a narrative of (voluntary) exile. With the exception of some lightly drawn American spiritualists (a commonplace in both English and Russian satirical writing of the period) and a few flashes of the Parisian *demi-monde*, Turgenev's Baden-Baden is as devoid of foreigners as it is of most varieties of Russians. In salons convened in expensive hotels, verbally bombastic radicals disparage Macaulay and talk up the German natural sciences just as they might have done at home, with this sense of Europe remaining a peripheral quantity even when one is in it prefiguring Nabokov's account, in *Speak, Memory* (1951), of the attitude of post-1917 Russian emigrés towards the inhabitants of the countries that received them:

Th[e] aborigines were to the mind's eye as flat and transparent as figures cut out of cellophane, and although we used their gadgets, applauded their clowns, picked their roadside plums and apples, no real communication, of the rich human sort so widespread in our own midst, existed between us and them.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Speak, Memory* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), p. 276.

Baden-Baden's manifestation as Russia displaced, condensed but untransfigured redounds significantly upon the evolution of the plot of *Smoke*, thrusting Turgenev's hero, Litvinov, into renewed acquaintance with his former fiancée Irina, now married to General Ratmirov. Litvinov's subsequent affair with Irina, conceived as a kind of tender throwback, comes close to ruining his happiness because *both are the same person they were*, with this development only compounding the *unheimlich* (because too home-like) and claustrophobic atmosphere of Turgenev's spa.

Thackeray and Turgenev's narratives both employ resort settings as a means of compressing domestic metropolitan society. *Smoke* and *The Kickleburys on the Rhine*'s excursions to the waters can thus be read as responses to the formal problem of rendering variety in a period of frantic ramification. As Philip Davis has noted in a discussion of Hippolyte Taine's well-known 1862 account of commerce on the Thames, such was the multiform challenge to narrative assimilation presented by city life in the decades after mid-century that 'the syntax of urban description [increasingly] had to be that of lists, phenomenal increase without coherent connectives'.<sup>34</sup> Circumscribed settings, on the other hand, reinterpolate boundaries, cut through complexity, delimit descriptive 'accumulation' and otherwise foster the kind of clean narrative lines that allow the salencies of modern life to be communicated with clarity and sureness. Narrating Baden-Baden and Rougetnoirbourg, Turgenev and Thackeray excise two kinds of social rump (the non-travelling element from home and, more surprisingly, the foreigner) the better to focus on their chosen cuts.

Arguably more dynamic in their handling of the Continental spa are those narratives that, rather than making of the waters a simplified microcosm of the *patria*, excavate resort culture's meanings in a domestic context. A persistent theme in Victorian periodicals is the awkwardness of encountering a compatriot abroad, with such encounters often represented (through the use of archetypes) as scenes of simmering contestation. "If he can come here, I shall certainly not pay him his bill", decides Captain Stiff of Snip, his tailor, in an 1880 spa scene

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<sup>34</sup> See Philip Davis, *The Oxford English Literary History Vol. 8: The Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 19.

from *Punch*'s satirical competitor *Fun* [see Fig. 10]. "Ang it, ere's Stiff!", thinks Snip in the same instant. "If he can come to a swell place like this, I won't take his excuse but make him pay up."<sup>35</sup> Neither, of course, confides his calculation in the other, the cartoonist's joke being to significant extent founded in the solipsism of their social logic (and their shared failure to register their meeting as a matter of macro- rather than a micro-economic significance).

A comparable dynamic unfolds itself in an unsigned 1895 piece from the liberal weekly *The Speaker*. The author enlists Carlsbad (now Karlovy Vary and a spa which, despite its popularity from mid-century, was rather neglected by the Victorian cultural imaginary—possibly because it had no casino) as a prism through which to lament the ubiquitous sociability of the aristocratic layabout, a popular London *physiologie* of the 1890s:

We have had enough of him already. He has jostled us in the crowded streets; we have felt his elbow on staircases; we have been bored by his conversation at dinner. Why should he occupy the best rooms in the foreign hotel where we have the greatest difficulty in securing attics? Why should the desert waste of his twaddle, which we hoped to leave behind in Piccadilly, stretch relentlessly before us at Carlsbad?<sup>36</sup>

'English' hotels will not keep at bay (indeed, they will only intensify contact with) a social type increasingly targeted by newer arms of the late-Victorian periodical press as a harmful anachronism. Continuing to register his animus through vacation-related tropes (by the century's end little sense remains in British print culture of the distinction between a holiday and a cure), the writer subsequently calls for a 'First Commissioner of Playgrounds to levy an altruistic toll on wealthy

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<sup>35</sup> Unsigned, 'Happy Thoughts at a Fashionable German Spa', *Fun*, 1 September 1880, p. 85.

<sup>36</sup> Unsigned, 'Mr. Traill as Socialist'. *The Speaker: The Liberal Review*, 13 August 1895, pp. 124-125 (p.124). The term *physiologie* was applied to the satirical description of social types—a technique pioneered in *Le Charivari*. See Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 28

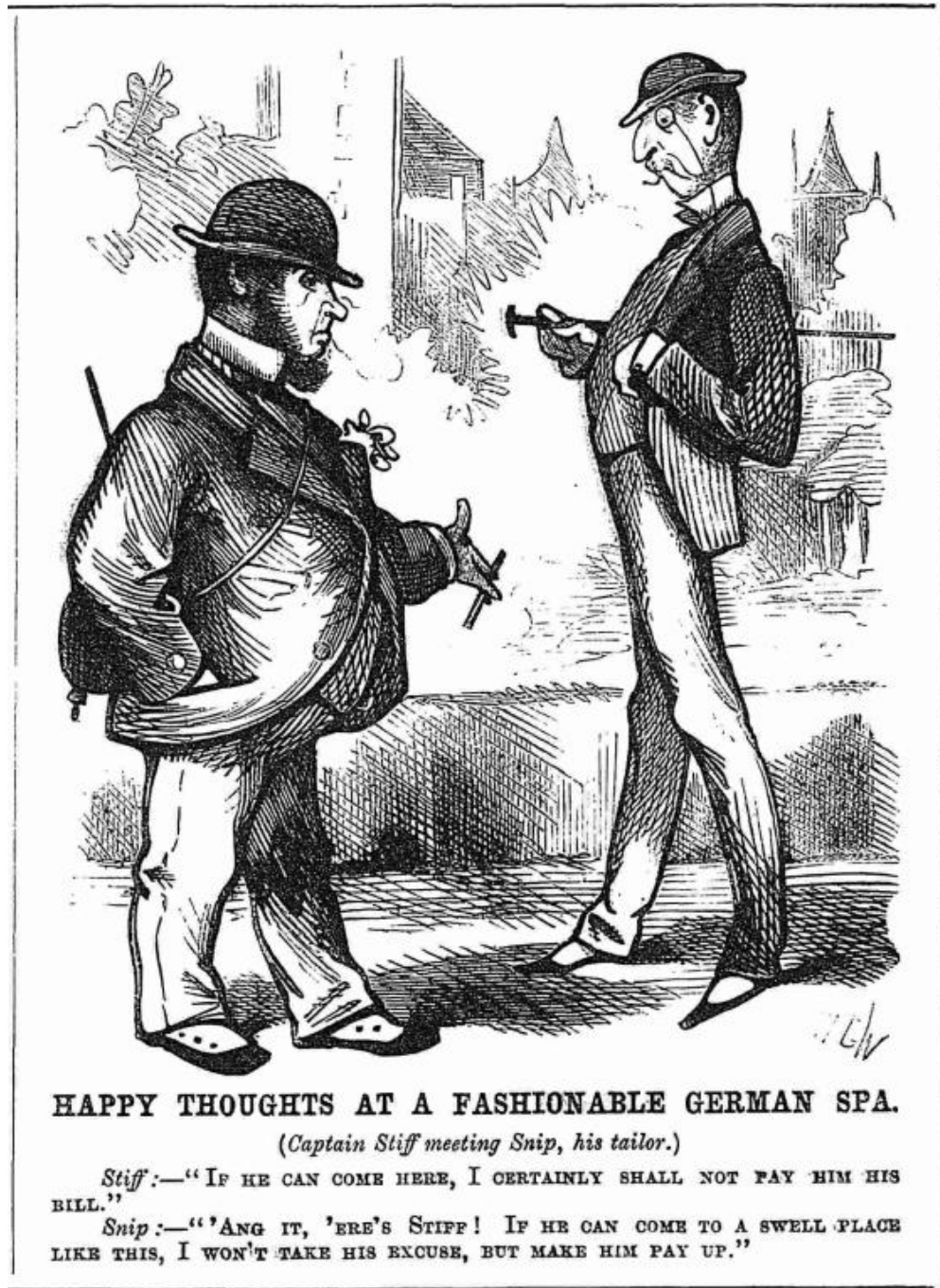


Figure 10: 'Unsigned, 'Happy Thoughts at a 'Happy Thoughts at a Fashionable German Spa'. *Fun*, Issue 799, 1 September 1880, p. 85.

pleasure seekers for the benefit of their less fortunate neighbours [...] rambles in the East End for people with not less than ten thousand a year, and days on the Thames between London Bridge and Gravesend for the proprietors of bank accounts which are never overdrawn.’<sup>37</sup>

The next chapter will explore in more detail how spa narratives intersected with (vexed) domestic discourses on class in a mid- and late- nineteenth century context. But I end this section with a final example, more expressly ideological than those excerpted from *Fun* and *The Speaker* (which, in the best Victorian satirical tradition, encase their structural commentaries in typological caricature) of how Continental resorts helped sharpen rhetorical perspectives on home affairs. In his travelogue *Over the Border* (1880), introduced in Chapter 2, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin bristles at the social iniquities simultaneously masked and brought into relief by the enthusiasm of wealthy Russians for European spas:

Millions of people are suffering, chained to the land and to their labour, paying attention neither to their lungs nor their kidneys, and knowing only one thing: that they must work; and suddenly out of this boundless, shackling sea emerges a handful of idlers who decree—on no authority but their own—that for some people (and for some reason) it matters that their kidneys are in proper working order!.

[[М]иллионы людей изнемогают, прикованные к земле и к труду, не справляясь ни о почках, ни о легких и зная только одно: что они повинны работе,—и вдруг из этого беспредельного кабального моря выделяется горсть празднолюбцев, которые самовластно декретируют, что для кого-то и для чего-то нужно, чтоб почки действовали у них в исправности!].<sup>38</sup>

(ZR, 10)

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Saltykov-Shchedrin turns his indignation not upon the narcissistic comportment of rich compatriots (though, as the next chapter shows, he has some hard words on that score too) but upon the lack of social solidarity signaled by their preoccupation with their own renal function in the context of the double bind of labour and landboundness still faced by most Russians two decades on from the defeudalizing reforms of 1861.

There is a feeling of wanting it both ways here, with *Over the Border* elsewhere implying (see Chapter 2) that resort culture's therapeutic aspect was just for show. In any event, Saltykov-Shchedrin's engagement with the waters in *Over the Border* is, like Thackeray's in *The Kickleburys* and Turgenev's in *Smoke*, significantly introverted, with Leverian cross-cultural rapprochements thin on the ground and usually serving comic ends. In the remainder of this chapter, by way of contrast, I want to look at spa texts that do narrate significant encounters with the foreign—and suggest that such narratives were not necessarily, or even commonly, internationalist in conception either.

### The Great Glory of Our Nineteenth Century': The Comparative Spa

'Many new influences', wrote the pioneering comparatist Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett in 1886, 'have combined to make the mind of Europe more ready to compare and contrast than it ever was before [...] we may call *consciously* comparative thinking the great glory of our nineteenth century.'<sup>1</sup> The rest of this chapter represents an attempt at consciously *metacomparative* analysis. This is to say I seek to ask what kinds of narrative and cultural work looking at foreigners performs in a mid- and late-nineteenth-century fictional context—and how resort settings bear upon the job.

By way of introduction to an extensive treatment of representations of the foreign in two spa novels of 1867, Avenarius's *The Contemporary Idyll* and Edmund Yates' *Black Sheep*, I want first to sketch resort culture's (significantly disparate) meanings in a contemporary American, Russian and British literary context.

‘The biggest show I ever went to’: Americans at Baden-Baden

In narratives of nineteenth-century America, and in contrast to the significantly microcosmic spirit of the Russian and English spa texts just discussed, European resorts usually come freighted with difference. (We remember, for example, Eugene Pickering’s ‘wonderment’ at Bad Homburg). Yet the appeal of Continental spa culture is consistently related in such texts to an interest in individual self-fashioning difficult to separate from the exigencies of a complexifying domestic class arrangement.

In his pathbreaking autobiography, in which he reframes the form as a both an exercise in intellectual self-interrogation and a meditation on the difficulty of self-knowledge, Henry Adams invokes the Continental spa as a social venue through which to destabilize, to typically self-deprecating effect, the distinction between moral *Bildung* and the cultivation of high-society manners. Recalling his travels in Europe as a young man in the 1860s, Adams reflects that

[t]he chances of accidental education were not so great as they had been [...] but perhaps a season at Baden-Baden in those latter days of its brilliancy offered some chances of instruction, if it were only the sight of fashionable Europe and America on the racecourse watching the [11th] Duke of Hamilton [William Hamilton (1811-1863)] [or] improving [one’s] social advantages by the conversation of Cora Pearl [1835-1886, a famous Paris courtesan].<sup>39</sup>

Visiting Continental spas helped solidify the quasi-aristocratic *habitus* of America’s mid nineteenth-century power elite. For unmarried, well-heeled gentlemen of independent means—people of the resources, if not the temperament, of Gordon Wright in James’s *Confidence*—resort culture formed part of a portfolio of opportunities for aesthetic, intellectual and cultural distinction (ostensibly) unavailable at home and (ostensibly) for the taking in Europe, while financiers, industrialists and other leaders of America’s business class, prominent abroad from the 1860s and profiled retrospectively in Theodore

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<sup>39</sup> *The Education of Henry Adams*, ed. by Jean Gooder (London: Penguin 1995), p. 202.

Dreiser's fiction, seem to have largely chosen to emulate rather than challenge the Brahmin taste for European watering places.

When an ousted manufacturing heir proposes to whisk a washerwoman's daughter off to Baden-Baden in Dreiser's novel *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911—but set largely in the 1880s), there is a sense of the trip as a pedagogical (for her) and cachet-restoring (for him) experience. Dreiser's Lester Kane plans his Continental sojourn 'ostensibly as a rest'; in reality he is 'not looking for health' but for an 'outing' that will both help him 'gather up the threads of his intentions', in the interests of a revival of his commercial fortunes and simultaneously fill in the gaps in his social credentials ('He had never been abroad'). Jennie is 'transported by what she s[ees]' in Europe—though Dreiser does not tell us exactly what happened at the spa—but Lester, reflecting that '[g]reat business enterprises were not built by travelers' is dogged throughout by 'an uncomfortable feeling that he [is] wasting his time'.<sup>40</sup>

Modern subjectivity, for which a fair working definition might be that it is the kind that self-consciously constructs itself, is correspondingly vulnerable to (self-) incrimination on charges of callow ostentation. In *A Tramp Abroad*, Mark Twain, with James and Howells the annotators *par excellence* of what was the first truly mass age of New World return-migration, runs the rule over American new money at the waters:

BADEN-BADEN (no date). Lot of vociferous Americans at breakfast [...] Talking AT everybody, while pretending to talk among themselves. On their first travels, manifestly. Showing off. The usual signs—airy, easy-going references to grand distances and foreign places.<sup>41</sup>

'The usual signs': 'Europe', wrote journalist William Hemstreet, author of *The Economical European Tourist* (1875), 'is the biggest show I ever went to'; and for

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<sup>40</sup> Dreiser, *Jennie Gerhardt* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1911), pp. 303-304. Taking time out from big business to see Europe is a recurrent trope in American culture of the industrial age. Johnny Case, the character played by Cary Grant in George Cukor's 1938 Hollywood romantic comedy film *Holiday*, has an agenda not dissimilar to Lester's (though Case's intentions are more obviously virtuous—and he does not plan to visit a spa).

<sup>41</sup> Twain, *A Tramp Abroad*, p. 202.



all the metafictional dissent of Howells' Rev. Mr. Waters in *Indian Summer* ('I'm bound to say that I don't find our countrymen so aggressive, so loud, as our international novelists would make out'), spa narratives have their place in a strong tradition of fiction, taken on well into the twentieth century by writers like Paul Bowles (*The Sheltering Sky*) and Patricia Highsmith (the Ripley novels), in which Americans in the Old World counterwork the better angels of their nature (vigour, bloom and novitiatory passion) with vaunting and culturally insouciant conduct.<sup>42</sup>

### Politics by Proxy: Russian 'Baden-Badenitis'

If in narratives of the post-bellum United States Continental watering places can appear to hold out the (generalized) promise of close contact with (or an education in) European elite sociability, in mid- and late-nineteenth-century Russian literature—and in the context of Russia's more vexed psychic relationship with Western Europe—the associations with Continental spa culture are rather more specific and focused. Often, despite the popularity of European resorts among Russian elites and perhaps above all thanks to Dostoevskii, they were pejorative. Baden-Baden became, in Pazukhin and Zhavoronkova's terms, 'a place of pilgrimage for Russia's cultured classes' ('[m]esto palomnichestva rossiiskogo kul'turnogo sloia') in the nineteenth century; but, even for many of those who went, Continental resort culture—and the Black Forest resort in particular—retained deeply ambivalent associations.<sup>43</sup>

A striking testament to the enduring figural resonance of Baden-Baden in Russian culture (and that resonance's roots in the nineteenth century) comes from Viktor Pelevin, the poster child of post-Soviet postmodernist fiction. In a novel called *Numbers* (*Chisla*, 2003), Pelevin enlists Baden-Baden to the service of a metatextual (in Gérard Genette's sense) commentary of the poet Fedor Tiutchev's (1803-73) patriotic-intuitivist dictum 'Russia cannot be understood

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<sup>42</sup> Hemstreet, *The Economical European Tourist: A Journalist Three Months Abroad for \$430* (New York: SW Green, 1875), p. 2; Howells, *Indian Summer*, p. 37.

<sup>43</sup> Pazukhin and Zhavoronkova, *Budem delat' Baden-Baden*, p. 39.

with the mind' ('Umom Rossiui ne poniat'), at the same time alluding, more glancingly, to the proclamations of an even better-known national ideologue—Dostoevskii.

*Numbers'* narrator puts a sardonic twist on Tiutchev's famous line. 'They say Russia cannot be understood with the mind. But why? It's quite simple. As soon as understanding starts to stir in the soul, the mind ups and leaves for Baden-Baden.' ('Govoriat—umom Rossiui ne poniat'. A pochemu? Da ochen' prosto. Kogda eto samoe nachinaet shevelit'sia v dushe, um srazu uezhaet v Baden-Baden').<sup>44</sup> The drift of Pelevin's irony seems carefully ambiguous. Tiutchev, who spent a large part of his adult life in Germany before returning to become, albeit largely after his death, an important poetic arbiter of the Russian national idea, is either made to look the butt of his own implicitly binarizing (mind/soul) wisdom—just another ratiocinating intellectual whose organic ties to the land mysteriously evaporate at the first sign of privation—or credited for (sensibly) placing both mind and soul out of the reach of imperial autocracy (most of Tiutchev's two decades abroad were during the proverbially reactionary reign of Nikolai I).

In the case of Tiutchev, whose time in Germany was largely spent on diplomatic postings—and who did not, at least, settle permanently at Baden-Baden like his poet-compatriots Vasilii Zhukovskii and Viazemskii (see Chapter 1)—a charge of patriotic apostasy is in fact difficult to contrive. Nonetheless, in invoking (and also instantiating) Russian intellectual recourse to Baden-Baden, and by appealing to the classic rhetorical opposition mind/soul, Pelevin registers the contemporary reverberations, in the context of a recrudescence of Russian national chauvinism in the first decade of the twenty-first century and the simultaneous renewal of Baden-Baden's popularity as a destination of choice for Russian tourists, of a spatial rhetorics which finds its fullest expression in the political journalism of Dostoevskii.

Dostoevskii formulated the abstract noun *baden-badenstvo* (which I translate, in an attempt to capture the term's pejorative rhetoric spirit, as 'Baden-

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<sup>44</sup> Pelevin. *Chisla* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2006), p. 236.

Badenitis') almost a decade after publishing *The Gambler*, in the context of an 1876 debate over Russian territorial claims on the Black Sea. Dostoevskii's platform in this case was not fiction but his *Writer's Diary* (*Dnevnik pisatel'ia*), begun as an opinion column in *The Citizen* (*Grazhdanin*)—a paper he had edited since 1873—and published from 1876 in separate monthly installments.

The article, 'Some Notes on Petersburg Baden-Badenitis' ('Nechto o peterburgskom baden-badenstve', 1876), begins by accusing the liberal journalist Ippolit Vasilevskii (1849-1920) of adherence to a political faction guilty of a timorous, unpatriotic and ahistorical view of Russia's destiny with respect to Europe. Warming to his theme, Dostoevskii proceeds to cast Baden-Baden as a third term in the venerable spatio-ideological altercation between St. Petersburg, Russia's imperial capital and 'window onto the West', and Moscow, hypostasized as the cradle of Russian nationality and Orthodoxy:

It is hardly my fault that your [Vasilevskii's] St. Petersburg view of Russia and her purpose has narrowed recently to the scale of some Baden-Baden [...] Who, after all, is to blame for the fact that Baden-Baden is the be-all and end-all for you nowadays? Of course, I'm not speaking about you alone: if the matter only concerned you I wouldn't have opened my mouth, but a good deal of Baden-Badenitis has sprung up in Petersburg besides you.

[И не виноват ведь я, что ваш взгляд на Россию и на ее назначение сузился под конец в Петербурге [...] Кто ж виноват, что у вас теперь везде и во всем Баден-Баден. Я ведь не про вас одного говорю; если б шло дело про вас одного, я бы и не заговорил, но в Петербурге и мимо вас много завелось баден-баденства.]<sup>45</sup>

Dostoevskii's *Writer's Diary* pieces have variously (sometimes simultaneously) been read as the genre-exploding culmination of his authorship and as indexing a personal descent into demagoguery and xenophobia.<sup>46</sup> 'Some Notes on Petersburg Baden-Badenitis' accommodates both interpretations. The thrust of

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<sup>45</sup> Dostoevskii, 'Nechto o peterburgskom baden-badenstve', *Dnevnik pisatel'ia*. July-August 1876 in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, 30 vols (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983), 23, pp. 57-58.

<sup>46</sup> See in particular Gary Saul Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas, 1981).

Dostoevskii's polemic, which amounts to a call for imperial aggression, is fairly poisonous. (In a remark that might easily return us to Chapter 3's discussion of Aleksei Mikhailovich's search for 'an order if not a system', Freud writes in 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' that, in retreating into political conservatism in later life, Dostoevskii 'threw away the chance of becoming a teacher and liberator of humanity and made himself one with their gaolers'.)<sup>47</sup> But its spatializing rhetorical logic is compelling. Two kinds of Russian national drift are juxtaposed: one southward, territorial and in the interests of geopolitical consolidation; the other westward, cultural and (lamentably, to Dostoevskii's mind) appearing to signal a *retreat* from national ambition. It remains unclear at the end of the piece whether Dostoevskii registers *baden-badenstvo* principally in terms of remissness or malice, the imputation of a yielding, luxuriant mentality (figured by watering-place culture) threatening throughout his later political writing to slide into suspicion of an organized *trahison des clercs*.

Dostoevskii had already made ideological capital out of Baden-Baden a decade earlier—with Ivan Turgenev on that occasion his *ad hominem* target. The reasons for Turgenev's 1863 installation at Baden-Baden were complex, and most biographers have cut the Gordian knot (and bowed to the prurient preferences of the nineteenth century's watering-place text) by citing his long-standing (and seemingly sexless) affair with the (married) mezzosoprano Pauline Garcia Viardot, who opened a music school in the town at the beginning of the 1860s. Dostoevskii, on the other hand, apparently motivated as much by personal animosity arising from the fifty-thaler loan of 1865 as by his dislike of *Smoke*, which he unsurprisingly found to be too sympathetic toward westernizing sentiment, offered a different kind of simple answer. But his 'eyewitness' account, given in a letter to the poet Apollon Maikov, of Turgenev's decision to live at Baden-Baden is certainly malicious and probably apocryphal.

"Know that I have settled here for good", Dostoevskii reported Turgenev as saying, "that I consider myself a German and not a Russian—and am proud of this!" ("Znaite, chto ia zdes' poselilsia okonchatel'no, cho ia sam schitaiu sebia za

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<sup>47</sup> Freud, 'Dostoevsky and Parricide', p. 177.

nemtsa, a ne za russkogo, i gorzhus' etim!"). Turgenev was given to intemperate statements: he had already, sardonically but rather tactlessly in view of the ideological climate in Russia in the 1860s, characterized himself as a 'lazy Baden bourgeois'.<sup>48</sup> But it is difficult to credit him with the literalism of expression—let alone the sentiment—ascribed to him by his rival. Dostoevskii's report to Maikov, written a month after the (alleged) fact, is better read as an inventive attempt to paint Turgenev as (and here I borrow Robert C. Williams's term from a study of the politics of Russian literary emigration) a 'ready-born émigré' in the mould of the radical exile and pioneering socialist thinker Aleksandr Herzen.<sup>49</sup>

An 1869 parody of Turgenev's *Smoke* is further suggestive of the functional role of Baden-Baden (and, more broadly, of fiction) in the political confrontation between Slavophile and westernizing opinion that dominated Russian intellectual life from the 1840s. *Smoke: A Novel in Caricature* (*Dym: karikturnyi roman*) a ribaldly illustrated, pamphlet-length skit by Adrian Volkov (1827-1873), well known as a painter of contemporary urban scenes, is an unsubtle (and at times chronically unfunny) take-off of Turgenev's controversial original. But Volkov nonetheless succeeds in laying bare the incongruities of a work—*Smoke*—that laid claim to domestic political and social penetration despite being set over a thousand miles away at a Black Forest spa.

Often content with bathetic word play and knockabout comedy (Volkov's version of Litvinov almost misses his fateful reunion with Irina because he is helping Bambaev up from a drunken fall), *Smoke: A Novel in Caricature* scores a few direct hits. The reader is repeatedly exhorted not to mistake Litvinov, a vacillating westernizer in Turgenev's text, for Piotr Iurkevich-Litvinov, real-life publisher of the Slavophile-leaning newspaper *The People's Voice* (*Narodnyi golos*). Volkov's 'novel' ends, meanwhile, with the mock-solemn news of Irina's elopement not with Litvinov, but with Bazarov, the hero of *Fathers and Children* (*Otsy i deti*, 1862), another of Turgenev's novels on the theme of European

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<sup>48</sup> On Turgenev, Dostoevskii and Baden-Baden, see Konstantin Mochul'skii, *Dostoevskii: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Paris: YMCA, 1980), p. 268.

<sup>49</sup> See Williams, *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany, 1881-1941*. (London: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 14.

influence and social reform.<sup>50</sup> Volkov's jumbling of the topical and the fictive here represents, apart from anything else, a wry commentary on the polemical and à-clef turn Turgenev's fictional art had taken since *Rudin* (1857).

In Volkov's parody, Baden-Baden crawls with 'absentee-liberals' and 'absentee-authors' ('liberally-absenteisty'; 'literatory-absenteisty'; 4); the 'absentee' part of these portmanteau coinages is deliberately brought into double entendre (11) with the Russian word for 'absinthe', suggesting an affinity between Russians of a westernizing persuasion and a Parisian license already beginning to be associated in Russia with Gautier and Baudelaire (Manet's *The Absinthe Drinker*, rejected by the Paris Salon in 1859, was not, apparently, known in Russia in the 1860s).<sup>51</sup> These 'poor little Hamlets' ('bednye gamletchiki; 5—the reference being to Turgenev's 1860 essay on ethical and political engagement 'Hamlet and Don Quixote' ('Gamlet i Don-Kikhot)) 'laze about' (zhuirovat'; 26) chasing women and discoursing pedantically on 'ci-vi-li-za-tion' (tsi-vi-li-za-tsi-ia'; 6). The narrator eventually dismisses them as 'aliens superfluous to Russian life' ('chuzhdye i nenuzhnye Rossii liudi'; 39). But Volkov also skewers hyperbolic and indiscriminate fearfulness of Baden-Baden and its Russians: in glossing Gubarev, a particularly loquacious ideologue in Turgenev's novel, as '[that] star of Russian absenteeism, radicalism, liberalism, socialism, communism, materialism, realism, nihilism and Engelsism' ('zvezda russkogo absentieizma, radikalizma, liberalizma, sotsializma, kommunizma, materializma, realizma, nigilizma i Engelsizma'; 6), his target seems rather to be the hysterical enemies of this parade of-isms—and the excessive convenience of painting a gadding place for all (elite) shades of the Russian national mind as a den of radical sentiment.

Finally, and in further evidence of the temporally skittish and often contrapuntual logic of literary transmissions, Dostoevskii's conception of *baden-badenstvo* endures in contemporary Russian culture partly due to the spirit of travesty. In the 1930s, Daniil Kharm's, early-Soviet avant-gardist and Russia's

<sup>50</sup> Volkov, *Dym: karikaturnyi roman zhiv'em vziatyi iz khudozhestvenno-satiricheskogo romana I.S. Turgeneva*. (St. Petersburg. 1869) p. 39. Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>51</sup> The first Russian translations of Baudelaire were published in the journal *Notes of the Fatherland* (*Otechestvennye zapiski*) in 1869. See Adrian Wanner, *Baudelaire in Russia* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), p. 10.

great poet of the impoverished cliché, wrote a series of gleefully spurious miniature accounts of Russian literary history. (In the most famous of these, ‘Pushkin and Gogol’ (‘Pushkin i Gogol’, 1934), Russia’s two most important writers of the first half of the nineteenth century enter an empty stage, apparently ready to declaim, but only succeed in tripping over one another repeatedly before shuffling off in embarrassment.) Kharms never took on the subject of Dostoevskii, Turgenev and Baden-Baden; but two Soviet satirists of the early 1970s, Natal’ia Dobrokhotova-Maikova and Vladimir Piatnitskii, writing in imitative tribute to Kharms in a book called *The Happy Guys* (*Veselye rebiata*, 1971-72; published 1996), did (their work, circulating in manuscript and published in journals, has often been mistaken for that of Kharms). Dobrokhotova-Maikova and Piatnitskii’s vaudevillean texts, in which members of the canon squabble and jostle for status, feature the recurrent punchline ‘and Turgenev left for Baden-Baden’ (‘i Turgenev uekhal v Baden-Baden’). However unjustly, the charge of self-serving dereliction implied by the phrase has stuck in the Russian cultural imaginary

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As I have suggested, nineteenth-century writing turns the putative transnationalism of Continental resort culture to multiple figural purposes, most of them inimical to the ideals underpinning cosmopolitan thought in the Kantian tradition. Texts about watering places more often foreground the construction of the self than recognition of the other, with the spa serving variously as microcosm, as an ambivalent venue of *Bildung*, and as a rhetorical touchstone in debates on nationality which, however vexed, play themselves out within binarizing (home/abroad, traitor/patriot) parameters.

When writers do train their sights directly upon foreigners encountered at spas, the resultant texts (and this too is somewhat in the epistemological tradition of nineteenth-century ethnography) frequently reflect a preoccupation with inherency, with this concern pre-empting or outweighing the

acknowledgment of contingency and shared characteristics that more often than not undergirds internationalist principle. Populist fiction in particular—and below I offer resort-set texts by Edmund Yates and Vasilii Avenarius as examples of the mode—fixates on national character in a manner into which it is sometimes difficult not to read chauvinism. More broadly, strife at spas models geopolitical affray: the scramble not just for warm-water ports but for symbolic capital. The readings that follow help register, I hope, the eminent historicizability of most appeals to the ingrainedness of national character.

### Bears and Bohemians: Russian *Kurgäste* Under English Eyes

English attitudes to foreigners, suggests the historian Spencer Walpole in *Foreign Relations* (1882), have a limited dynamic range, sliding between ‘customary indifference’ in peacetime and heartfelt jingoism (the term was coined during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, in which Disraeli, to Walpole’s dismay, threatened to involve Britain) in the event of conflict.<sup>52</sup> English spa narratives from the second half of the (long) nineteenth century partly bear out Walpole’s characterization (which brings to mind an aphorism of Régis Debray’s—‘polite indifference towards those other than oneself is the surest indication of a position of hegemony’); they also index British attitudes to Russia in the context of a sharpening diplomatic atmosphere.<sup>53</sup>

As the Russian empire hove into view as a credible economic and military rival to Great Britain after 1840, Russians began to figure more prominently in English accounts of watering-place culture. But the manner in which Russians are represented in English resort texts after mid-century is, while increasingly wary, by no means straightforwardly uncomplimentary; and, while such representations undoubtedly reflect geopolitical manoeuvring as reported in the press, a number of other cultural and narrative factors were, I would suggest, also at play in shaping the image of Russians in English print culture.

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<sup>52</sup> See *Foreign Relations* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1882), p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> See Debray, *God: An Itinerary*, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman (London: Verso, 2004), p. 52.



‘Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight her? shall we yield?’: Tennyson’s line in the dramatic monologue ‘Locksley Hall Sixty Years After’ (1886) refers to the so-called Pandjeh Incident of 1885, in which Russian forces captured Afghan territory in an act widely interpreted as a challenge to British domination of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>54</sup> More broadly, it illuminates the diplomatic tensions that affected Anglo-Russian relations in the years between the Crimean War—commemorated by Tennyson in ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’ (1854) and announcing Russia as a military power in Europe despite her defeat—and the diplomatic entente of 1907 that defused the air of mutual threat.

Yet martial tropes had figured prominently in English descriptions of Russians since long before Crimea, with the Napoleonic Wars a standard reference point in the first half of the century. In *An Autumn Near The Rhine* (1821), an early spa memoir, Charles Dodd invokes ‘[a] distinguished Russian General [...] I knew at Carlsruhe (*sic*) [who] had been stripped at the tables of Baden of no small portion of the immense spoils which his Cossacs (*sic*) had procured him during the war [...]’.<sup>55</sup> (Here the adjective ‘distinguished’ is rather undercut by news of the general’s non-participation in the creation of his fortune—and by his reported proficiency in squandering it.) In *The Kickleburys on the Rhine*, Michael Angelo Titmarsh reports, also *en passant*, on his encounter at Rougetnoirbourg with ‘[the] Count de Mustachev, a Russian of enormous wealth.’ In frustration at a bad run at the roulette wheel, the count puts on a classically orientaling affective show of superstition, aggression and deficient self-restraint: ‘[he] clenched his fist, beat his breast, cursed his stars, and absolutely cried with grief, not for losing money but for neglecting to play and win upon a coup de vingt [a rouge-et-noir scenario in which a red card is turned up twenty times in a row].’<sup>56</sup>

Titmarsh’s conspectus of national character, elsewhere shrewder and more iconoclastic, here draws heavily and not obviously critically on Western European

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<sup>54</sup> Tennyson, *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (London: Macmillan, 1886), p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Dodd, *An Autumn Near The Rhine*, p. 262.

<sup>56</sup> *The Kickleburys*, pp. 50–51.

stereotypical tradition—Giles Fletcher’s much-reproduced *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (1591) is an obvious source, while the Marquis de Custine’s journals of his trip through Russia in 1839 had been published in English translation in the 1840s—and so feels perfunctory. The suggestion that Mustachev’s ire is less mercenary than self-lambasting is suggestive (was the general on the brink of perfecting a ‘system’?) but for the most part Thackeray seems on *pro forma* national-caricatural ground, as in his description of Dobbin’s school days in *Vanity Fair* (“Torture in a public school is as much licensed as the knout in Russia.”).<sup>57</sup>

The Victorian preoccupation with other nations’ savagery, a frequent theme in discussions of nineteenth-century imperial ideology, is usually linked to the empire’s (increasingly explicit) *mission civilisatrice*. Less well documented is the tendency of writers to resort to Cratylan naming (e.g. ‘Mustachev’) in their exegetics of the foreign. Names (of writers, foodstuffs, places) are often the first elements of an alien culture that readers and travelers encounter, and the context of such fleeting encounters as those volunteered by Dodd and Thackeray, they are frequently the chief impression that remains with the reader. Onomastics therefore plays a special role in the rhetorics of intercultural encounter and judgment.

Russian names in particular seem to have fascinated nineteenth-century English writers. In *A Residence on the Shores of the Baltic* (1841), the future art historian Elizabeth Eastlake characterizes them ‘strange [and] full [...] like water gulping out of a bottle’, and while Thackeray’s choice of ‘Mustachev’ represents a straightforward comic appeal to popular conceptions of Asiatic (‘Mongol’) facial physiognomy, other formulations invite more comment.<sup>58</sup>

The Princess of Fuskymuskoff, a Baden-Baden grandée with whom the title family in Frances Trollope’s *The Robertses On Their Travels* (1846; see the next chapter) cultivate an acquaintanceship, is one such example. A ‘high born and highly married’ lady and a ‘beauty of some years standing’—Mrs. Trollope’s faux-slapdash locutions mimic the diction of high-society gossip sheets—the

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<sup>57</sup> Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> Eastlake, *A Residence on the Shores of the Baltic*, 2 vols (London: John Murray. 1841), 2, p. 69.

princess's title invokes both the mild pejorative designation 'russky', derived from the Russian word for 'Russian', and Muscovy, the early-modern political entity out of which the Russian Empire arose.<sup>59</sup> In English 'Fuskymuskoff' both suggests a strong odour ('musk') and is faintly redolent of obscenity (though 'fuck off', the sonic association that perhaps comes most readily to twenty-first century ears, was not in use in the 1850s). The word is also a near-palindrome. Mrs. Trollope takes names seriously, finding in them not easy clues to the character of the named party, as in parodic tradition, but more hermetic hints as to her *nature*—a far solemn (and nationally coded) thing. Harking back to the fifteenth century by invoking Muscovy, she is only following standard aristocratic nomenclatural practice. But 'Fuskymuskoff'—pungent, outlandish—is also an excellent sonic foil to 'Roberts' (in its bourgeois plainness and awkward plural form not much less essentializing).

As I have suggested, English writing from before mid-century makes an issue, though not a virtue, of Russian cultural hybridity, customarily implying that Asiatic brutality has been swabbed with expensive scent. The English travel writer Richard Ford (1796-1851), writing in 1841, the same year as Eastlake, wrote of the common perception of Russians as 'uninteresting barbarians [...] Scythians in Paris-cut coats',<sup>60</sup> while Mustachev, as we have seen, has both 'enormous wealth' and a Frenchified aristocratic title but teeters atavistically on the brink of violence.

In post-Crimean War narratives, the emphasis tends to be a little different. Russian *Kurgäste* are still seldom treated in more than a few lines, but they now tend to be represented as somewhat more deceitful and insidious than had previously been the case—as if instead of trying and failing to be civilized, they were now only pretending. Indeed, the false Russian 'general' cheating at cards in the 1864 article from *Bentley's Miscellany* discussed in Chapter 2 starts to look like the standard bearer for a new typology. Flame-haired Lydia Gwilt, the villainess in Collins's *Armada*, has in the course of her youth—and rather like

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<sup>59</sup> *The Robertses on Their Travels*, 3 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), 2, p. 190. Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>60</sup> Cited in Cross, *Russia Under Western Eyes, 1517-1825* (London: Elek, 1971), p. 39.

the young Barry Lyndon in Thackeray's 1844 novel—'traveled about all over the Continent' in the 'sinful' company of a Russian 'swindler', 'card sharper' and soi-disant 'baroness'. Though Collins does not tell us, during this period in Miss Gwilt's life (when '[e]verything was right, everything was smooth on the surface [but] everything was rotten, everything was wrong under it') she must surely have taken in a watering place or two.<sup>61</sup> Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth, meanwhile, is left unsupervised at Leubronn in *Daniel Deronda* because her husband, Grandcourt, has been 'induced by the presence of some Russian acquaintances to linger at Baden-Baden and make various appointments with them' (the mind boggles).<sup>62</sup> The abiding impression is of Russians abroad as increasingly self-possessed—and increasingly puissant. The two principal hotels in Eliot's Leubronn are named the Russie and the Czarina; while Mark Twain quotes in *A Tramp Abroad*, the counsel that 'if you wish to see to what abysses servility can descend, present yourself before a Baden-Baden shopkeeper in the character of a Russian prince'.<sup>63</sup>

American spa narratives of the same period, less touched by Crimean affairs but registering in their responses to the foreign domestic spectres of their own, attend to the idea of Russian cultural hybridity rather less archetypally than English writing. Yet, like Richard Ford, they frequently latch onto sartoriality as a way of troping the national mind. In an 1862 sketch from the *Weekly Novelette* entitled 'Baden-Baden', Russian noblewomen model elegance and social tone for style-conscious American ladies (whom the Civil War has evidently not kept at home):

[T]he belles of St. Petersburg, with their alive complexions, citron colored dresses, piquant hats and charming *tournoure* (sic) [...] add immensely to the varied nature of the scene [...] There are no balls so *recherché* as those given by the Russians, and the spirit they infuse into them makes one doubt if they care a single rouble about the emancipation of the serfs.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Collins, *Armadale*, p. 524-525.

<sup>62</sup> *Daniel Deronda*, 1, p. 283.

<sup>63</sup> Twain, *A Tramp Abroad*, p. 200.

<sup>64</sup> Unsigned, 'Baden-Baden', *Weekly Novelette*, 8 November 1862, p. 143.

The *Weekly Novelette*—doing with gossipy lightness what cultural critique in the tradition of Walter Benjamin and the French historian Philippe Perrot later began doing rather more self-consciously—recognizes everyday signifying practices, notably fashion and entertainment, as key markers of social change in modernity. The Emancipation reforms of 1861—which brought an end to the feudal order in Russia, if only in legal terms— and unrest in Russian Poland had splashed imperial St. Petersburg across British and American newspapers’ foreign pages in the early 1860s (‘Alexander II has plainly learnt wisdom from the lessons which have been of late read to royalty’, opined *The Times* on the tsar’s conduct in both areas).<sup>65</sup> In the above extract, continuing Russian sartorial ambition (and success) at Baden-Baden—by the 1860s well established as a summer surrogate for Paris—is made to testify against the expectation that a reconstitution of class relations at home would mean an end to Russian elites’ famously lavish sumptuary expenditure abroad. (It was widely anticipated in Russia and abroad that the end of serfdom would lead to the impoverishment of noble estates—and this was indeed the case in many instances.)

*Contra* Richard Ford (and Eastlake’s equally hybridizing 1841 pronouncement that ‘[n]o nation so ingeniously unites the most perfect sluttiness with the most perfect good breeding [as the Russians]’) the *Weekly Novelette*’s ‘belles of St. Petersburg’ are immaculate specimens of European-style sociability.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the article, however, is a kind of submerged (or repressed or unwitting) self-reflexivity—a looking outward in order to (not) look inward. Drawing lines between the macro (social reform) and the micro (ladies’ fashions) in a Russian context, the author makes no mention of home. Yet in 1862, the end of the season at Baden-Baden coincided with the Second Battle of Bull Run (August) and an even bloodier Confederate victory at Harper’s Ferry (September)—matters as apparently incongruous as Russian serfdom with citron dresses and piquant hats.

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<sup>65</sup> “London, Thursday, April 4, 1861.” *Times*, 4 April 1861: 8. *The Times Digital Archive*. <[www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive)> [accessed 18 September 2014].

<sup>66</sup> See Eastlake, 2, p. 70.

Finally on nineteenth-century representations of Russian *Kurgäste*, an intertextual note registering the dizzying circulation of ideas and anecdotes between and among fiction texts and the globally diffused organs of an highly interconnected (but by no means integrated) Anglophone periodical press. Thackeray's Mr. Titmarsh speculates that, had he played a wiser game at *rouge-et-noir*, Count Mustachev might have 'broken the bank, and shut the gambling house [...] and all the balls and music, all the newspaper-rooms and parks, all the feasting and pleasure of this delightful Rougetnoirbourg would have been at an end.'<sup>67</sup> In August 1851, four months before *The Kickleburys* was published, the New York weekly *The Spirit of the Times* had reported that 'an event somewhat unusual in the gambling watering-places of Germany occurred at Baden-Baden two or three days ago. A Russian nobleman, an officer in the guards, broke the bank on two successive evenings, pocketing more than 30 000 francs.' In December 1851, the month of *The Kickleburys*' publication, Adelaide's *South Australian Register* published an almost identical report.<sup>68</sup>

I have been unable to track down either reliable evidence of any such bank-breaking or a London master-source for these two reports (and thus, conceivably, for Titmarsh's Mustachev fantasy) but it is evident that stories of unappeasable and destructive Russian lusts were very much in the air in Britain in the second half of 1851, playing into and taking impetus from diplomatic tensions between the two countries. Thackeray's Christmas book, freely embroidering upon a multiply (re-)mediated fragment, helped cement an image of animalistic clout that seemed made for the times—and in which can also be discerned traces of the popular diatribes against the 'rugged Russian Bear' that animated English popular culture at the time of the Turkish crisis of 1877-1878.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *The Kickleburys*, p. 51.

<sup>68</sup> See Unsigned, Untitled, *The Spirit of the Times*, 30 August 1851, p. 363; Unsigned, 'Foreign Intelligence', *South Australian Register*, 1 December 1851, p. 2. The 'breaking the bank' scenario, written conclusively into Anglophone cultural myth by Fred Gilbert's 1890s music hall song 'The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo', is one of those fantasies of escape from mechanisms of social and economic control that themselves serve as mechanisms of social and economic control.

<sup>69</sup> See e.g. Penny Summerfield, 'Patriotism and Empire: Music Hall Entertainment, 1870-1914' in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. by John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 17-49 (p. 25).

A final spa text suggests a Bloomian ‘clinamen’ or revisionary swerve in the representation of Russians in British Edwardian culture. Katharine Mansfield’s sketch cycle *In A German Pension* (1911), set at the fictional German resort of Mindelbau, is an uneven early work, written three years after she left New Zealand to settle in England. Significantly autobiographical—the narrator’s vegetarianism and unconventional marital arrangements evoke the author and Mindelbau is probably a proxy for Bad Wörishofen in Bavaria, where Mansfield went to recuperate in 1909 after the breakdown of her first marriage—the book is strong and sympathetic when it comes to (especially working-class) female experience, but struggles to overcome a certain superciliousness of tone in other respects.

Among Mansfield’s targets (for all her rather worked-upon bohemianism the narrator is not above Great Power rivalry and the text feels pregnant with omens of war) is the German nation. The first sketch, ‘Germans at Meat’, initially invokes imperialist confrontation (“‘Don’t be afraid,” Herr Hoffmann said. “We don’t want England. If we did we would have had her long ago” [...] “We certainly do not want Germany,” I said’) before going on to mark German ugliness, gluttony and bourgeois complacency—clichés challenged, incidentally, by Violet Hunt in her contemporaneously-written non-fiction account of Bad Nauheim (“The traditional German eats a great deal, drinks a great deal and takes no exercise at all. Real Germans [...] eat very sparingly of food cooked “à la mode du pays du France”).<sup>70</sup>

Yet meanspiritedness with respect to her hosts is permuted into amused—even mildly admiring—condescension in Mansfield’s narrator’s encounter with a Russian spa guest. In a sketch called the ‘The Luft-Bad’ (‘a collection of plain, wooden cells, a bath shelter, two swings and two odd clubs’—again, Mansfield’s Mindelbau is at odds with Hunt’s Bad Nauheim, permeated by ‘the soft, pleasing,

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<sup>70</sup> Mansfield, *In a German Pension* (London: Stephen Swift, 1911), p. 15; Hunt, *The Desirable Alien*, p. 88.

egoistic spirit of wealthy invalidism'<sup>71</sup>), spartan communal facilities promote unconstrained sociability:

A young Russian, with a 'bang' curl on her forehead, turned to me.  
"Can you do the "Salomé" dance?' she asked. "I can."  
"How delightful," I said.  
"Shall I do it now? Would you like to see me?"  
She sprang to her feet, executed a series of amazing contortions for the next ten minutes, and then paused, panting, twisting her long hair.  
"Isn't that nice?" she said. "And now I am perspiring so splendidly. I shall go and take a bath."<sup>72</sup>

As Petra Rau has observed, in Mansfield's story cycle 'talk and action unremittingly focus on corporeality [and] most bodily actions [occur] on the same level: perspiration and mastication; serving food and marrying; having babies and cooking.'<sup>73</sup> To this list might be added dancing. The young woman's bang curl mark a continuing synechdochic association of Russianness with female sartorial and aesthetic performance, but her 'amazing contortions' seem to index a shift from the Apollonian to the Dionysian mode.

What Mansfield's 'young Russian' performs was, at the time *In A German Pension* came out, a popular or a cutting-edge piece depending on which version one had in mind. The 'Salomé' dance or Dance of the Seven Veils, made famous by Oscar Wilde's controversial 1891 symbolist adaptation of the biblical story of the death of Saint John the Baptist and Richard Strauss's opera based on the play, was further popularized in music halls and on film in Russia, Britain and the United States between about 1908 and 1912. But Mansfield's association of Salomé with Russia may well have owed something to the touring success of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, whose principal dancer Ida Rubinshtein had performed the Dance of the Seven Veils naked in Moscow and Paris in 1908-9.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *The Desirable Alien*, p. 95.

<sup>72</sup> *In a German Pension*, p. 128.

<sup>73</sup> Rau, *English Modernism*, p. 134.

<sup>74</sup> On 'Salomania', see Petra Dierkes-Thrun, *Salome's Modernity: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetics of Transgression* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), pp. 94-97.



Louise MacReynolds has cited the responsibility of John Murray's and Karl Baedeker's guide-book empires for the 'demi-orientalization' of Russia in a nineteenth-century Western European context; as I have just suggested, not only guide books but fiction and travel memoir too helped shape this image. But with modernist art and culture as a broad sweep helping to renovate the image of the 'Orient' from the 1890s (earlier if we think of Flaubert and Gautier), it seems appropriate that the association of Russianness with a hybrid complex of brutality and self-indulgence should start to give way to—and Mansfield's narrator's other neighbor in the Luft Bad is 'living entirely on raw vegetables and nuts [...] ample rational nourishment'—a connotation with dizzy newfangledness that, by the early 1900s, spa culture was beginning to share in too.<sup>75</sup>

'Nature Spoilers': European Manners in Avenarius's *The Contemporary Idyll*

'La fille du Nord glacé admire les productions du Genie Anglais', wrote the Russian poet Anna Bunina (1774-1829), in England for cancer treatment at Bath, to Walter Scott in 1817.<sup>76</sup> 'For a Russian, poor and degraded, here in the world of beauty, wealth and freedom, it is hard not to go mad', Chekhov, who died at the German spa of Badenweiler, is reported to have exclaimed in Venice—a different kind of water resort—in 1891.<sup>77</sup>

*The Contemporary Idyll* (*Sovremennaia idillia*), a little-known but fascinating—at least for the narrative contortions it performs to get its satirical message across—Russian novella of 1867, sets out to reproach an attunement toward European cultural models that to its author represented a lamentable mix of ravishment à la Bunina and Chekhovian discombobulation. Set at Wiesbaden and Interlaken, Vasilii Avenarius's spa text at times reads like a forerunner—

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<sup>75</sup> McReynolds, *Russia at Play*, p. 187.

<sup>76</sup> Cited in Gleb Struve, 'Friends and Correspondents of Sir Walter Scott', *Comparative Literature*, 2, 307-326 (p. 323).

<sup>77</sup> Cited in Donald Rayfield, *Chekhov: A Life* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), p. 243. Stephen Crane, in some senses an American Chekhov, died at the same resort four years before him.

albeit clumsier and more anodyne—of Dostoevskii's attack on Russian revolutionary radicalism in *The Devils* (*Besy*, 1872).

*The Contemporary Idyll*'s young Europhiles are not violent 'nihilists' after the (reported) fashion of the notorious Nechaev, whose 1869 murder of a fellow conspirator was a source of inspiration for Dostoevskii's novel. They are, rather, wealthy, complacent and westernized young people abroad for the first time. But their pharisaism, iconoclasm and moral confusion—all linked in the narrative to their interest in European and American cultural and intellectual trends and exposed through their conduct and conversation at the spa—are made to portend the disaster of patriotic apostasy.

Avenarius, whose varied body of published work includes biographies of Gogol' and Pushkin for young readers and a patriotic fictional account of the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812, has little time, in the sense of sympathy, for any of *The Contemporary Idyll*'s six young protagonists (three male, three female). This can make the novella, essentially an anti-cosmopolitan comedy of manners but structured more like a Socratic dialogue, a disorientating read—with it frequently being the case that, in order for one character's viewpoint to be revealed as callow, another will shift their own ideological ground in order to confront him. This failure to patrol the boundaries between social archetypes drains Avenarius's novella of some of the satirical authority it might otherwise enjoy.<sup>78</sup>

Lastov—a callow poet, Zmein, a pedantic chemist, and Kunitsyn, a didactic young jurist—appear, at least at the outset, to represent cut-and-dried social *physiologies*—the arts, the natural sciences and jurisprudence being three areas of Russian intellectual life whose penetration by Western influence was much discussed in the 1860s.<sup>79</sup> In a figurally important passage, (Lev) Lastov and (Sergei) Kunitsyn *write themselves as Europeans* in the visitor's book of the Hotel R. in Interlaken, becoming 'Leo Lastow' and 'Sergius von Kunizin' respectively. (Zmein's name already suggests both German cultural influence and untrustworthiness—'zmeia' in Russian is 'snake'.) In case the hint at essences

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<sup>78</sup> Avenarius's Napoleonic book is *Sredi vragov* (*Among Foes*, 1912).

transformed should otherwise escape the reader, Avenarius has Lastov mistakenly enter his occupation as ‘Naturfuscher’ (*nature spoiler*) rather than the intended ‘Naturforscher’ (*natural scientist*).<sup>80</sup>

Liza, Nadezhda and Monichka, Avenarius’s three ‘emancipated’ (*emansipirovannye*; 81; 98) young ladies—Liza wears her hair cropped in the George Sand style—sin even more egregiously against essence. Or rather, and here there is an echo of the *Spielbank* narratives I discuss in Chapter 3, the text’s female characters are granted even less licence to contain multitudes in terms of allegiance and identification than its male ones.

*The Contemporary Idyll*’s satirical target is westernized and westernizing Russian youth—a topic that, as we have already seen, was cathected with much libidinal energy in Russia in the 1860s. Like Dostoevskii in both *The Gambler* and *Diary of a Writer*, and, in a much more ambiguous way, Turgenev in *Smoke*, Avenarius’s novella offers spa culture as a synecdoche for European cultural and social norms and forms, in doing so laying two principal charges against the waters.

Firstly, Continental resorts are represented as de-anchoring social *relations* both between the sexes and in other respects, promoting a free and easy discourse with potentially dangerous consequences. Monichka, barely sixteen, compliments Zmein on being ‘not bad looking’ (*neduren*) (80). Liza, Monichka and Nadezhda, all unmarried, are barely chaperoned at Interlaken, despite concerns that they will ‘compromise themselves’ (*komprometirovat’sia*, 46). Kunitsyn tells stories of the *demi-monde* in their presence. At Wiesbaden, where the novella opens with a coaxing description of orange trees and the scent of gourmet cookery, the young women are almost robbed of their small winnings after they venture into the casino unaccompanied (For more on this episode, see the next chapter.) Liza and Nadezhda’s mother tries to stop the permissive rot but ‘nobody pays her any attention’ (‘nikto [...] ne udostoil ei vnimaniia’; 47).

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<sup>80</sup> Avenarius, ‘Sovremennaia idilliia’, in *Brodiashchie sily* (St. Petersburg: [n. pub.] 1867), p. 66. Further references in parenthesis.

Secondly—and here Avenarius’s point is backed up by other nodes in the nineteenth-century’s watering-place text—resorts are shown to foster the destabilization of social (and national) *identity*, not least by encouraging (even mandating) linguistic, sartorial promiscuity and the trying on of other people’s cultural parts. Lever’s Arthur O’ Leary, as we might expect, finds such place-trading both amusing and invigorating, as his description of the *Cursaal* at Wiesbaden suggests:

Four hundred guests are assembled, their names indicative of every land of Europe, and no small portion of America [...] who, not satisfied with the chances of misunderstanding afforded by speaking their own tongues to foreigners, have adventured on the more certain project of endeavouring to [be] totally unintelligible, by speaking languages with which they are unacquainted; while in their dress, manner, and appearance, the great object seems to be an accurate imitation of some other country than their own. Hence Frenchmen affect to seem English, English to look like Prussians, Prussians to appear Poles, Poles to be Calmucks [...] <sup>81</sup>

Avenarius’s young people pepper their Russian with *mon dieus* and *buona nottes*. They also codeswitch: ‘*Franchement dit*, you have behaved *bien impoliment*’ (“*Franchement dit*, ty postupil dazhe *bien impoliment*”); 32). Lastov and Kunitsyn quarrel fractiously about whether they should speak French, German or Russian at the spa. French, claims Kunitsyn in cod-Kantian language, is ‘a guarantee of the evolution of a person’ (*garantiia razvitosti cheloveka*)—a global *lingua franca* facilitating ‘global progress’ (*vsemirnyi progres*) (32). But Lastov uses his foreign languages to flirt with shopgirls (41) and maids (75); and, unlike *The Adventures of Arthur O’ Leary*, *The Contemporary Idyll* is broadly and flatly antipathetic toward its spa-goers’ ‘general tendency to transmutation’.

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<sup>81</sup> *Arthur O’ Leary*, 3, pp. 83-84.

‘The position of our educated young ladies is indeed sad’

*The Contemporary Idyll*’s especial negative coding of *female* aspiration to perceivedly Western norms of conduct is usefully viewed against the backdrop of an extended controversy over Russian women’s access to education.

Secondary schooling for girls was introduced in Russia in the 1850s on a limited basis. Women were permitted to audit university courses in some cities in the early 1860s, apparently as a result of confusion over the scope of the university reforms of 1863. But by 1867, the loophole had been fixed and women were explicitly forbidden to attend lectures.<sup>82</sup> Liza, it is revealed in Avenarius’s novella, attended university courses for over a year ‘until the prohibition’ (*‘pokuda vyshlo zapreshcheniia’*) (44); and the reader may be expected to infer that she is among the significant number of Russian women who in the mid-1860s, frustrated at the lack of domestic opportunity, enrolled on degree courses at Zurich University (some 70 miles from Interlaken).

In any event, and as Christine Johanson has observed, the ‘woman question’ (*zhenskii vopros*) in nineteenth-century Russia was tightly entwined with the question of Russia’s relationship to Western Europe. National campaigns for the education and social emancipation of women were variously represented as the (necessary or invidious) result of the influence of European and American feminism or justified by appeal to the necessity of restoring Russia to great-power status after the debacle of the Crimean War. Liza’s desire for a higher education, like her haircut, is a capacious ideological signifier.

Avenarius’s narrative registers two distinct objections to women’s education. A year at university has been enough to turn Liza into a ‘phlegmatic know-it-all’ (*‘flegmaticheskaiia doka’*) (54) and ‘bluestocking’ (*‘sinyi chulok’*) who can tolerate neither compliments on her appearance (99) nor gifts (198). Yet the novella is simultaneously inclined to suggest that the principle of emancipation is a

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<sup>82</sup> This decision would be reversed in 1869 with the sanctioning of advanced courses for women in Moscow, only for the door to close again after the assassination of Aleksandr II in 1881. On the political and social contexts touched upon in this section, see Christine Johanson, *Women's Struggle for Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1900* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), especially pp. 9-27 and 51-59.

threadbare pretext for licentiousness. Lastov, Zmein and Kunitsyn treat Nadezhda, Liza and Monichka as ‘objects’ (*predmety*) (55), dividing them up between themselves in advance of an outing. Avenarius’s young women, more notably in a Russian fictional narrative of the 1860s, do the same thing, putting the language of rights to frivolous use: ‘we women [...] have as much right to kiss as men do’ (“‘tselovat’ my, zhenshchiny, imeem [...] takoe zhe pravo, kak muzhchiny”); 57).

It is difficult to tell whether the polemic *The Contemporary Idyll* constructs on the subject of women’s rights and foreign norms is supposed to be mimetic of the sophomoric intellectual habits of his young protagonists or rather reflects the best rhetorical efforts of its author. When Liza invokes the United States as a country in which women participate fully in intellectual life (‘ “In New York there are women professors...”’; “v N’iu-Iorke zhe est’ professorshi...”’), Zmein retreats from the Americophilia he has previously exhibited to fill the adversarial spot opened up by her remark: “Who are probably all spinsters” (“kotorye, veroiatno, vse kholosty”; 123). Zmein’s further remark, to the effect that married women would be unable to balance the demands of motherhood and academe, brings to mind the American feminist Margaret Fuller’s prediction, in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), that those who sought to restrict women’s influence in the world to the private sphere would frame their argument by the ‘ludicrous’ invocation of “ladies in hysterics at the polls” and “senate chambers filled with cradles.”<sup>83</sup>

More novel a response to Liza’s speech in favour of female intellectual emancipation is Zmein’s invocation of the spread of cosmopolitanism as grim proof that women should prioritize the cultivation of womanhood and nationhood over book learning:

“The position of our educated young ladies is indeed sad [T]hey will tell you, say, when and why Alexander the Great scratched himself behind the ear or how to calculate the square root of...sodium nitrate [But] having as dim a conception of Russia as of the Sandwich Islands they grow completely indifferent to the well-being

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<sup>83</sup>*Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Greeley and McElrath, 1845), p. 23.

of their fatherland and are made lady-cosmopolitans in the worst sense of the word.”<sup>84</sup>

[—Грустно в самом деле положение наших институток [...] они скажут вам, пожалуй, когда и зачем почесал себе за ухом Александр Македонский, или как извлечь квадратный корень из...кубической селитры [но] имея о России такие же смутные понятия, как о Сандвичевых островах, они делаются совершенно равнодушными к благу своей родины, делаются космополитками, в самом жалком значении слова—].

(115)

The above diatribe—delivered for lack of an alternative interlocutor by a character whom the reader would never have expected to harbour such patriotic sentiments—could serve as an epigraph for Avenarius’s novella, which puts female impressionability at the centre of its negative conspectus of Western influence.

Zmein’s binarizing distinction between knowledge-as-datum and knowledge-as-felt-value also goes close to the epistemological heart of mid-nineteenth century Russia’s ideological divisions. The suggestion, implicit in the muddling of square roots and chemical compounds, that post-Enlightenment rationality is not only a false god but also inaccessible to the Russian mind (Russia can neither be understood with the intellect, nor *understand with it*, to invoke Tiutchev again) might remind us of Aleksei Ivanovich’s pronouncements on Russians and roulette in *The Gambler*. But perhaps the crucial muddling here is of nationality and gender: the problem with the ‘lady-cosmopolitan’ seems to be that she is both more and less Russian than her compatriots—more corruptible by ideas (coded European) *because* she is a unitary creature of feeling (coded Russian).

If Avenarius’s male character’s attitudes to the *patria* can be patronizing, the young women’s are sooner dismissive. After praising France as ‘*la grande nation*’ and reminiscing about a wine (revolutionary vintage 1848) he once drank in Paris, Kunitsyn pronounces: “One day our poor Russia might achieve even a

shadow of all that!” (“Kogda-to nasha bednaia Rossiia dostignet khot’ teni vsego etogo!”). “Don’t even mention her [Russia]!” (“[I] ne upominaite o nei!”), retorts Monichka (77).

Yet Avenarius’s polemic drift appears to be that such attitudes are insincerely held, serving to mask lustful *arrières-pensées*. In an attempt to make himself attractive to Monichka, Kunitsyn claims to have read all of Proudhon, and thus to understand that ‘le vol, c’est la propriété’ (97-98). This inversion (at the cost of its sense) of the anarchist philosopher and economist’s slogan (which was in any case hackneyed by the 1860s) is meant to expose the young jurist’s intellectual dilettantism. Nadezhda has read the westernizing Russian literary critic Vissarion Belinskii rather more carefully—and quotes him (accurately) in scorning love as a relic from ‘the sentimental period of the Romantics’ (‘sentimental’nyi period romantikov’; 93) and advocating ‘rational attachment’ (‘razumnaia [...] priviazannost’; 93). (Again, it is difficult to see whether the fondness of *The Contemporary Idyll*’s watering-place Russians for the political thought of the 1840s—contemporary radicals like Chernyshevskii and Dobroliubov barely get a look in—reflects their or the author’s out-of-dateness.) But Nadezhda’s interest in ‘rational attachments’ translates in practice into a taste for flirting. Monichka’s full given name, meanwhile, is Salomonida, expressly associated in the text with Salome (“Monichka, Salomonida. Salome”) (95); and this invocation of the story from Mark 6:21-29, a strikingly early one in a nineteenth-century context (twenty-five years before Wilde), furthers the association of cosmopolitan manners with an eroticized, feminized and facilely conceived misfeasance.

Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, a direct ideological opponent of Avenarius in the context of the period’s tortuous debates-in-letters over Russian national identity—in a review of *Wandering Forces* (*Brodiashchie sily*), the collection in which *The Contemporary Idyll* was first published, Saltykov called Avenarius ‘a young writer [...] with positively no promise for the future’ (‘pisatel’ molodoi [...]



polozhitel'no nichego ne obeshchaiushchii v budushchem')<sup>85</sup>—nonetheless offers, in *Over the Border* a comparable sense of Continental watering places as collocating the worst of Russia:

I had never in my life seen such a perfect group of fops and left Baden with an even deeper hatred for our so-called cultured classes than I had felt living in Russia. In Russia I was acquainted only with the odd one or two from this group [whereas a]t Baden I encountered an entire troupe of people who reveled in their own idleness, stupidity and swagger [...].

[Такого совершеннейшего сблища всесветных хлыщей я до сих пор еще не видал и вынес из Бадена еще более глубокую ненависть к так называемому русскому культурному слою, чем та, которую я питал, живя в России. В России я знаком был только с обрывками этого слоя, обрывками, живущими уединенно и не показывающимися на улице. В Бадене я увидел целый букет людей, довольных своей праздностью, глупостью и чванством].<sup>86</sup>

It would be an interesting exercise to try and gauge the overlap in personnel between Saltykov-Shchedrin's 'perfect group of fops' and Avenarius's 'nature spoilers', Turgenev's hypocrites and Dostoevskii's sufferers from Baden-Badenitis. Rarely a venue of rapprochement otherwise, the spa serves for all four writers, albeit in differing degrees, as a kind of conceptual corral for those elements of Russian national life with which they most firmly refuse identification.

Yankee Chutzpah: Edmund Yates's *Black Sheep* (1867)

Thackeray's Michael Angelo Titmarsh—whose resort Russians, I have suggested, are fairly perfunctorily drawn—assays in more detail the Americans he encounters at Rougetnoirbourg. As so often in resort narratives, sartorial tropes

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<sup>85</sup> Saltykov-Shchedrin, 'Brodiashchie sily' in *Sobranie sochinenii v 20 tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literature, 1965), 9, p. 236-241 (p. 241).

<sup>86</sup> *Over the Border*, p. 62.

abound—and as usual in the *The Kickleburys on the Rhine*, Thackeray's American archetype is gendered as male:

Among the travellers in Europe who are daily multiplying in numbers and increasing in splendor, the United States's dandies must not be omitted. They seem as rich as the Milor of old days; they crowd in European hotels; they have elbowed people of the old country from many hotels which we used to frequent; they adopt the French fashion of dressing rather than ours, and they grow handsomer beards than English beards [...].<sup>87</sup>

Dandies and 'Milors': Thackeray makes two distinct (and, by the 1850s, venerable) domestic social types the comparative bases for his account of mid-century American aspiration. It seems telling that one equivalence is grounded in metaphor and the other in simile. He may 'seem as rich as' the young aristocrats whose descent on Europe in the era of the Grand Tour was the stuff of periodical lore, but Thackeray's American is more consummately the 'dandy'—who for all the shine is frequently represented in Victorian periodical culture as an anxiously self-fashioning figure. Titmarsh anyhow acknowledges that these are only his own, parochial reference points: Paris, with the spa as its proxy, is the emulative *nec plus ultra* for Victorian-American 'go-ahead souls' (to borrow Howells's ironic self-characterization from *Indian Summer*); the English gentleman is an intermediary icon, about to be outstripped.<sup>88</sup> The whole, finally, is characteristic of Thackerayan social explanation, representing outcomes in terms of a game of distinction to which the keys, as much as money, are manners and self-presentation.

A more sensational spa narrative of the 1860s brings the perennial intersection of Victorian discourses on nationality with those on class and gender (and the predication of all three upon visual-typological accounting) into sharper relief. *Black Sheep*, a pot-boiling prodigal-son story complete with murder, adultery and imposterism, was the sixth of nineteen novels by Edmund Yates, also a journalist, playwright and confederate of Dickens. It was serialized in

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<sup>87</sup> *The Kickleburys*, p. 64.

<sup>88</sup> Howells, *Indian Summer*, p. 338.

*Household Words*' successor *All the Year Round* in 1866-67, sold well in three volumes and was adapted by Yates for the London stage in 1868.<sup>89</sup>

The black sheep of the title is George Dallas, who leaves a good home for a life of debauchery before returning to the hearth at the end of the novel. But the plot ultimately turns on an affair, begun at Bad Homburg, between the villainous Stewart Routh, Dallas's instructor in crime, and Mrs. Ireton P. Bembridge, a mendacious but beguiling New York socialite. Yates undertook a lecture tour of the United States in 1872—and one wonders how many questions he fielded on that trip about his highly unfavourable portrayal of a character pointedly referred to in *Black Sheep* as 'the American lady'.<sup>90</sup>

As with Thackeray's *Mustachev* and Frances Trollope's *Princess of Fuskymuskoff*, Mrs. Bembridge's nationality is registered onomastically: she adheres to the middle-initial naming convention favoured by a number of mid-century American statesmen (Polk, Fillmore, Grant); and (here the text facetiously lays the ground for her adultery) she goes (exclusively) by her late husband's full name. Such occultations, innocuous in themselves, can look in the context of the novel's tendentious ethical economy like indices of the cardinal trait that helps Mrs. Bembridge feel so at home at Bad Homburg—her meretriciousness.

Here are Yates's narrator's two fleeting evocations of the casino at Homburg—an eroticized and feminized space:

The often-described scene at the Kursaal displayed all the customary features. Light, gilding, gaiety, the lustre and rustle of women's dress, the murmur of voices, and the ring of laughter in all the rooms not devoted to play [...] the brilliant-dressed crowd, talking, laughing, flirting, lounging on the velvet seats, and some furtively yawning in the weariness of their hearts [...] (2; 288).

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<sup>89</sup> *Black Sheep*, 2, p. 293. Further references in parenthesis. 'According to William Tinsley, its publisher, 'quite two-thirds' of the [novel] was written by the unacknowledged Mrs. Cashel Hoey and palmed off on Dickens [...] as Yates's original composition.' John Sutherland, *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 67.

<sup>90</sup> See P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's Young Men* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), p. 125.

Gleaming surfaces, bright social noise—moral lassitude within: Yates’s ‘American lady’ is built like a gambling room, whose very modern collocation of hubris and rational calculation she also embodies. “Such a twinkling, flashing, glittering, coaxing, flippant mortal I never met in my life”, observes George Dallas (2; 269). Mrs. Bembridge’s ‘teeth [shine] like jewels’; she persistently looks ‘right and left’—as if for the ghost of a social advantage (2; 273); and cuts a vulgar dash in her ‘over-ornamented’ equipage (2; 272). ‘[I]ntolerable consciousness and domineering boldness’ show in ‘[her] face, [her] air, [her] whole person’ (2; 273): *le style*, to cite an invidious maxim against the grain, being *la femme même*.

Not explicitly characterized as Jewish—her married name speaks against the idea—Mrs. Bembridge has nonetheless taken for the season ‘[one of] the Schwarzschild houses’. This hardly-disguised allusion to the Rothschild banking dynasty, whose Villa Rothschild still stands near Bad Homburg (it is now a Kempinski-chain hotel), is one of a number of mild anti-Semitic intrusions in *Black Sheep*; and Americanness and Jewishness are later invoked as adjacent points in a spectrum (“What does Arthur Felton look like? Very like a Yankee, and a little like a Jew”; 2; 280). Yates’s Homburg, where Mrs. Bembridge proves a thorough social success—George Dallas’s dissent (“not a bit in my style”; 2; 274) helps index his moral rehabilitation—is a hotbed of insurgent presumption, a many-tentacled threat in the anti-cosmopolitan economy of the text.

Mrs. Bembridge’s foil in *Black Sheep* is Harriet Routh—the Englishwoman whose husband she seduces at the spa. Yates’s narrator describes Harriet as ‘a lady, simply dressed, of a small slight figure, and whose face was bent downwards, but in whose air there was unmistakable refinement’ (2; 280-281); between them, she and her rival reify the social thesis, associated by Kevin Swafford with the novels of Anthony Trollope, that ‘money alone—and all that it buys and puts on display—can never authenticate social status.’<sup>91</sup>

Yates’s binarizing ethics of femininity is also figured through spatial arrangement and material texture. Mrs. Bembridge is customarily represented in positions of artificial elevation—on horseback or in a carriage; on one occasion

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<sup>91</sup> Swafford, p. 5.

she appears, under a ‘rich filmy fabric’ of black mantilla (2; 289). Harriet, consistently unaccounted and always on foot, is ‘staid and decorous’ (1; 66) and ‘[w]oman-like’ (2; 272)—there is ‘no simulation here’ (1; 68).

Harriet’s sincerity is underscored both by her ‘seem[ing] to dislike [Bad Homburg] very much’ (2; 283) (‘the scene presented by the little white town [...] was gay, striking, pleasant and varied’ (2; 229); only Harriet and, incrementally, George Dallas recognize that a *scene* is what it is) and by her commitment, dislike notwithstanding, to a regular water-drinking regimen. Mrs. Bembridge, a brash ancestor of Ford’s Florence Dowell (she has ‘more brains than heart’ (2; 307), is never glimpsed at the waters. Instead she frequents the casino and Homburg’s public walks, producing scenes of her own.

Yates is not oblivious to the conventionality of his portrait of American femininity. Mrs. Bembridge, as a minor character observes, is ‘like one of those impossible women in the American novels, with clusters of currants made in carbuncles, and bunches of cherries in flawless rubies, in their hair—you know the kind of thing I mean’ (2; 269). ‘Impossible’ indeed seems the collocation of generality (‘the kind of thing I mean’) and particularity (‘clusters of currants made in carbuncles’) ventured here. But more curious—and revealing about *Black Sheep*’s mimetic ambition—is that, as in a courtroom, (fictional) precedent should be invoked to validate rather than undermine a judgement. We should believe in Mrs. Bembridge, Yates appears to suggest, *because* she is the stuff of novels. Sensation fiction, with its determinedly up-to-date themes but overwhelmingly generic loyalties, is a prodigious manufacturer of types, and in a Victorian context, the form both feeds and reflects a passionate respect for templates.

Stefan Collini has argued that character, in the sense of an outcome-governing ethical totality, was important to the Victorians as to no historical constituency before or since.<sup>92</sup> The idea of *national* character, a kind of secularized zodiacal hermeneutics, represents a very particular twist on a way of

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<sup>92</sup> Stefan Collini, ‘The Idea of ‘Character’ in Victorian Political Thought’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35, (1985), 29-50, p. 31.

accounting for conduct that continues to exercise powerful sway. Yates's portrayal of Mrs. Bembridge reflects a Bagehotian sense of national tendencies running deep, but, as with the cunning, confident Russians in English spa narratives of the post-Crimean period, there is also a sense here of resort fiction as a tracker for (geo-)politically informed ethno-graphic trends: Stewart Routh's seducer has about her a tavern-bred shamelessness—this being the image of the Jacksonian United States that emerges in Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832)—but also foreshadows the (putative) world-historical arrogance of Carnegie and the 'robber barons'.

Neither type, it would appear, is the equal of an Englishwoman. Harriet Routh not only humbles Mrs. Bembridge by her self-abnegating response to her husband's infidelity but also, once out of pernicious Homburg (and in an act of exemplary self-forgetfulness), rescues her from adultery by helping her to avoid Stewart's (by-now unwanted) advances. But, reading dialectically, we also find (national) vice, somewhat perversely, redeeming (national) virtue in *Black Sheep*'s spa passages. Until she meets Mrs. Bembridge at Homburg, Harriet's best qualities ('untiring, undying, unquestioning love'; 1; 63) have worked against her, rendering her a complicit victim of her husband's criminality and abuse. It takes an encounter with positive malice, in the form of the [national-feminine other], to shock her (gendered) goodness into becoming a vital moral force. *Black Sheep* elsewhere acknowledges that assets can slide into stultifications (a country house is described as representing 'a life essentially English in its character, in its staid respectability, in its dull decorum'; 1; 273); for Yates, nationality seems most to appeal—whether ethically or salaciously—as an active, fate-shaking principle.

Stewart Routh, whose name appears in *Burke's Landed Gentry*, is also an eminently *national* figure—'there was no mistaking him for anything but an Englishman—darker, harder-looking than most of his race, but an Englishman' (1; 57—but, if his Englishness imprints itself upon him, Yates at least exempts him from having to stand for Englishness. Just as it takes a feminine eye to see through feminine wiles (Mrs. Bembridge is, Harriet observes prophetically, '[a] woman whom men would love for a little while, and hate bitterly after, I fancy;

but whom women would hate at once, and always', 2; 274; *meretrix*, it might be worth recalling here, is the Latin for 'prostitute'), it takes a woman—instinctual, primary—to embody a nation.

## Conclusions

The Continental spa emerges from the print culture of the second half of the long nineteenth century on the one hand as an exemplary critical *lieu commun*, gathering—and marking the shared preoccupations of—a transnational range of literary communities; and on the other as a deeply ambivalent paradigm space for transnational encounter. Across a range of texts, resorts are offered as vantage points from which to look at—and measure oneself against, and show oneself as distinct from—the national other; but decidedly not, for all Arthur O' Leary's best hopes for an ethical *bouillabaisse* and despite the suggestive name of Baden-Baden's central *Conversationshaus*, as utopian fora for cross-cultural dialogue.

It is tempting to explain the failure of the nineteenth century's watering-place text to foster or reflect a sustained cosmopolitan discourse by reference to the locus itself. What the Bénazets, Blancs and company were building at Europe's major spas were unabashedly commercial rather than ideal communities. Yet fiction set at spas—and fiction of the period more broadly—nonetheless represents nationality in significantly ideal terms, placing high rhetorical value on exteriority as the hard copy of an incorporeal essential being. It is thus hard not to regret that the work of imaginative identification that goes into animating the foreigner in many of the texts considered in this chapter frequently serves the imposition of distance—and the accentuation of what the social philosopher Steven Lukes has characterized as the 'contrastive'—as opposed to 'inclusive'—'we'.<sup>93</sup>

If nothing else, the above survey of watering-place encounters has highlighted the difficulty, in a nineteenth-century context, of disentangling literary discourses on nationality from discourses on gender and class. 1867, the

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<sup>93</sup> Lukes, *Moral Relativism* (New York: Picador, 2008), p. 22

year in which *Black Sheep*, *Smoke*, *The Gambler* and *The Contemporary Idyll* were all published and thus something of an *annus mirabilis* for the transnational-spa theme, was also the year in which working-class men were enfranchised in Britain for the first time, in which the first volume of Marx's *Capital* appeared, and in which Pissarro painted *The Hermitage at Pointoise* (*Les côteaux de l'Hermitage, Pontoise*), an important elegy for pre-industrial social forms (and landscapes).

Three years earlier, Dickens's *All The Year Round* had carried an interview, conducted by Edmund Yates, with the pioneering travel agent Thomas Cook. One of Yates's—rather leading—questions concerned the 'character' of fellow traveller one could expect to encounter on a Cook's tour:

[Cook] responded shortly: 'First rate'; but on its being explained to him that the social status, rather than the moral character of his excursionists is being inquired after, he became more communicative.<sup>94</sup>

The next chapter, rounding off my engagement with the spa as a setting performing ambivalent narrative work on the theme of the other, explores how nineteenth-century resort texts registered and sometimes deepened confusions of moral and class 'character' in the context of a sharpening social conjuncture.

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<sup>94</sup> Yates, 'My Excursion Agent', *All The Year Round*, 7 May 1864, p. 302.



## **Chapter 6**

**‘A Striking Admission of Human Equality’:  
Class Trouble in Spa Texts**

[I]t is the truism of the age, that the masses, both of the middle and even of the working classes, are treading upon the heels of their superiors [...]<sup>1</sup>

[L]et there be but the slightest vestige of fullness, or tension in the system, and instead of curing [...] the *Ursprung* will do mischief [...]<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mill, 'Civilisation', pp. 117-147 (p. 125).

<sup>2</sup> Granville, *Spas of Germany*, p. 64. The *Ursprung* is the name of the principal hot spring at Baden-Baden.

This chapter, making up a pendant with the last in the sense that it approaches the Continental spa as an experimental venue for narrative investigations into the ethical problem of living with the other, focusses upon resort encounters between the classes. In introducing the theme, I want to turn back, briefly, to Avenarius's conservative satire *The Contemporary Idyll*.

Monichka, though she has promised her aunt she will not play, stakes a florin on *rouge* at the roulette table in Wiesbaden—and wins. But before she can claim her small prize, ‘another’s hand’ (*chuzhaia ruka*) (*SI*, 12) reaches out and pockets it. Too abashed to protest, Monichka and her cousin Nadezhda are left to wonder quietly to one another how the interloper could have dared:

They did not suspect that their neighbour had been bound to take [Monichka's winnings], that this was his profession. For he belonged to the well-known category of indigenous proletarians who exist exclusively at the expense of the bank and gamblers: never staking anything themselves, they hope instead to seize their moment and monopolize the winnings of others.

[Они не подозревали, что сосед их должен был взять, что то была его профессия: он принадлежал к известной категории туземных пролетариев, существующих исключительно на счет банка и играющих: никогда ничего не ставя, они стараются улучшить минуту, чтоб воспользоваться чужим выигрышем.]

(*SI*, 13)

Mercifully Lastov is on hand to intervene—playing, so to speak, a youthful Plantagenet Palliser to Monichka's Glencora—and the young women are left in peace to resume the axiomatic practice of losing all the money they arrived with.

The opening passage of Avenarius's novella crystallizes the deterministic ('bound to') drama of threat and salvation played out in multiple bourgeois narratives of class encounter at Continental resorts. As the last chapter suggested, Avenarius's narrator is generally unsympathetic to his young protagonists, whose 'Europeanized' mores and easy intercourse he draws as frivolous and unpatriotic. But the way in which Monichka's encounter at the tables of Wiesbaden unfolds implies a certain re-forging of identification, in spite of sensibility and politics, in

the face of a common menace. Lastov's deliverance of his young compatriots, who are also his peers in class terms, from the threat posed by a (nameless, faceless) 'indigenous' (*tuzemnyi*) 'proletarian' produces what is, in the context of *The Contemporary Idyll's* furiously Socratic construction, a never-to-be-repeated scene of consensus (and one that even includes the narrator).

Narrowly opportunistic, 'never staking anything [himself]', Avenarius's watering-place 'proletarian'—the term had been in use for a couple of centuries by the time Marx began to theorize it in the 1840s and, in view of the relative hoariness of *The Contemporary Idyll's* other ideological reference points (Proudhon, Belinskii), is almost certainly not deployed here in a Marxian sense—hardly resembles György Lukács's messianic 'subject-object of history'.<sup>3</sup> Yet even an unconcerted urban poor, apparently following metropolitan money to fashionable spas—Heinz Grosche's history of Bad Homburg reports increasing complaints, as the resort came to prominence at mid-century, about crime, beggary, busking and 'rabble' (*Gesindel*) of both sexes—could and did occasion alarm.<sup>4</sup> I am keen to avoid a crudely class-based analysis, but it is difficult to escape, in certain texts and especially in writing about the spa casino, a sense of some mid-century writers as the *chargés d'affaires* of an (internally divided) bourgeois class perturbed by its own precedent of social movement and correspondingly keen to consolidate its winnings.

As I will suggest, some resort narratives (Thackeray, Dostoevskii) seem to take the apparent demographic mixedness of spas in their stride, sourcing exuberance or splenetic energy from the clashing of tones. Others—Avenarius, and in an 1846 novel called *The Robertses on their Travels*, Frances Trollope—can appear set on involving watering places in a venture to reinforce embattled hierarchies by naturalizing them.

In the context of what appears to have been a drastically increasing visitorship—Baden-Baden recorded more than fifty thousand overnight guests in

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<sup>3</sup> See J.M. Bernstein, *The Philosophy of the Novel: Lukács, Marxism and the Dialectics of Form* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Grosche, *Geschichte der Stadt Bad Homburg vor der Höhe: Vol. III: Die Kaiserzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Waldemar Kramer, 1986) p. 176.

1857, as against barely thousands in the 1820s—writing about resort culture from the 1850s and 1860s frequently seems to long backwards, regretting the (putative) infection of bolt-holes and backwaters with the spirit of the bazaar. Moreover, the commercial dispensation increasingly invoked in regard to watering places seems to have been intuitively linked—see also Lever’s ‘licensed bazaars of foreign iniquity’ in Chapter 5—with an alien spirit of immorality.

If Wilkie Collins’s antipastoralism in *Armadale*, quoted in my Introduction (‘the country people, in their quaint German costume, placidly expectant’), is suggestive of the losses associable with the mass-marketization of resort culture and accompanying social change, other narratives dwell, at times a little paranoically, upon the sinister side of what might be gained. In ‘Baden-Baden’, written in the same year—1855—as his missive about Russian émigrés at Wiesbaden (see Chapter 1) yet rather at odds with its spirit, the Russian poet Petr Viazemskii, perhaps inspired by the Grand Duchy’s three outbreaks of revolution in 1848-1849 (during which revolutionary years the access of foreigners to Germany was significantly cut off, with *Punch* reporting that the proprietor of a bathhouse on Gray’s Inn Lane in London had introduced gambling facilities in an attempt to furnish a lucrative substitute), summons alarming visions of an urbane irruption upon Baden-Baden.<sup>5</sup> Viazemskii’s poem equates the mid-nineteenth century’s predominant metropolises with Old and New Testament paradigms for worldly hubris:

Then Paris and rust-brown London,  
Capernaum and Babylon,  
Turning their sights upon my Baden,  
Will press her from all sides [...]

The long-familiar coquettes  
[Will] here cast again  
Their tattered nets and offer up  
Their antediluvian breed of love.

[Тогда Париж и Лондон рыжий,

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<sup>5</sup> See Unsigned, ‘English Substitutes for German Spas’, *Punch*, 29 April 1848, p. 181.

Капернаум и Вавилон,  
На Баден мой направив лыжи,  
Стеснят его со всех сторон [...]

Давно известные кокетки,  
Здесь выставяющие вновь  
Свои прорвавшиеся сетки  
И допотопную любовь.]

The poem concludes: ‘And my Baden, where I like a monk/Am sunk deep in contemplation/Will be a noisy marketplace tomorrow/The home and haunt of madmen’ (‘Baden moi gde ia kak inok/Ves’ v sozertsan’e pogruzhen/Uzh zavtra budet—shumnyi rynok/Dom sumasshedshikh i priton’); and over the course of seventeen stanzas that also take in existing blights (‘The blind knight of roulette/In search of golden crumbs; ‘Rytsar’ slepoi ruletki/Za sborom zolotykh krupits’), Viazemskii makes an extremely thorough job (to invoke Shelley’s apology for poetry) of beholding the future in the present.<sup>6</sup> The watering place as a hermitage only *threatened* with assailment by the forces of commercial and erotic derangement: Viazemskii’s 1855 prophesy looks quaint in the light of the composite picture offered so far in this thesis (and registered in writing by Lever and Thackeray in particular) of the spa of the 1850s as an idyll long since enlivened.

Arguably, what made watering places so functional narratively was also part of what could make them fearful *loci* from the point of view of elites. Doing away with the physical distance and symbolic mediation (particularly work) that can serve to naturalize differences in outcome in everyday life, resorts threaten (or promise) the decongealment—or at least the laying bare—of otherwise obscured truths about social relations. But the spa’s circumscribed spatiality and ritualistic sociability were also, I will suggest, put to mystificatory effect, physiognomy and manners being more easily swallowed as arbiters of fate in environments dedicated to display.

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<sup>6</sup> See Viazemskii, *Stikhotvoreniia; Vospominaniia; Zapisnye knizhki* (Moscow: Pravda, 1988), pp. 81-82.

‘Proletarian’ and bourgeois parvenu, exemplary delegates of Marx and Engels’s ‘two great hostile camps’ of modern industrial civilization, are also two of nineteenth-century spa fiction’s most prominent types. They are dealt with rather differently. As David Herman has noted in an imperial Russian context, desperate poverty represents a frightening breed of alterity, but the other that resembles the self (and is therefore, conceivably, unrecognizable) is often a more worrying prospect.<sup>7</sup> In a class climate increasingly muddied from the ‘who’s who’ angle—as Franco Moretti has observed, the bourgeoisie, a rising contingent both in numbers and in authorship at mid-century, was almost by definition a social group characterized by ‘porous borders, and weak internal cohesion’—identification was key. It may be partly for this reason that fictional watering places, like much of the rest of Victorian fiction, throng with impostors literal (like Thackeray’s Mogador, introduced below, and Dostoevskii’s Mlle. Blanche) and figurative (like the Robertses—see below).

Before embarking on a discussion of imposture and *arrivisme* at the spa, I want first to return to the figurality of the gambling table, a space troping what is frequently represented as an unnerving encounter with social lowness.

### Back to the Tables: Troping Class Threat

As I have already suggested in this study, the table d’hôte and the roulette (or rouge-et-noir) table are vital metaphorical touchstones in nineteenth-century writing about Continental spas. The former is suggested as a utopian venue of impromptu diplomacy in Lever’s *The Adventures of Arthur O’Leary* (see Chapter 5), while the latter—which at Baden-Baden made up part of a single congressional space complete with dining tables and a ballroom—resurfaces as an acme of motley in the same writer’s *The Diary of Horace Templeton* (1848):

[A] less exclusive assemblage [than the *Cursaal* at Baden-Baden]  
cannot be conceived; five francs and clean gloves being the only

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<sup>7</sup> Herman, *Poverty of the Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature about the Poor* (Evanston: Chicago University Press, 2001), xi.

qualification needed [...] Many of the men I knew to be swindlers and blacklegs of the very lowest stamp; some others I recognized as persons of the highest standing in my own country. Of the lady part of the company the disparities were even greater.<sup>8</sup>

Admitting (almost) all-comers, the casino can seem to restrict opportunities for social distinction—and thus to be emblematic of a levelling age. In fact, and as above, mixed company italicizes rather than cancelling out ‘disparity’. Registering only ‘swindlers’ and ‘persons of the highest standing,’ Horace Templeton’s survey of *Spielbank* sociability obscures the middle and professional classes, implicitly positing the class to which he belongs—he has been, as Lever would later be at La Spezia, a diplomat attached to a foreign mission—as a neutral standard. We can read such self-effacement doubly: Franco Moretti suggests that it is in part by constructing itself almost exclusively in negative terms—as a featureless buffer separating top from bottom—that the bourgeoisie has managed, historically, to ‘[g]arder l’incognito’ and forestall challenge.<sup>9</sup> But narratorial greyness can also, of course, be a productive formal choice, furnishing even ground for social observation.

In any event, the special disparateness with which Templeton credits ‘the lady part’ of the assembly bears out, as does so much nineteenth-century writing on resort culture, William Dow’s observation, in a Victorian-American context, that class’s meanings are ‘inevitably [...] tintured by, dependent upon, or in conflict with, other basic categories of identity’.<sup>10</sup> Women, as at the roulette table and in many other places, are the vehicles for a figural maximalism (‘highest standing’/‘lowest stamp’) that structures by furnishing their virtual poles, discourses on both class and nationality.

In Lever/Templeton’s narrative, established hierarchies reassert themselves, as if organically, with the different ranks gravitating, presumably motivated by the stakes and conversation they favour, to different regions of the *Cursaal*. Only dancing, de-privileging discourse and wealth in favour of bodily

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<sup>8</sup> Lever, *The Diary and Notes of Horace Templeton Esq.*, (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1848), p. 79-80. Further references in parenthesis.

<sup>9</sup> Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> William Dow, *Narrating Class in American Fiction*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2009), p. 2.



capacity—and conjuring perceptual blur—threatens a new, less manageable thawing-out of social relations.

There was, it was true, a species of sifting process discernible, by which the various individuals fell among those of their own order; but though this was practicable enough where conversation and grouping were concerned, it was scarcely attainable in other circumstances, and thus, the Mazurka and Polka assembled ingredients that should never have been placed in close propinquity.

(80)

In a gesture of compound figurality that might have been better suited to Arthur O' Leary's account of the *table d'hôte*, Lever's narrator—and one gets a sense from the squeamishness of the above passage of the author taking up an ironic distance from Templeton—tropes the *Cursaal* and its attendant sociability in culinary terms ('sifting', 'ingredients'). The wrongness of the mix is thus framed, at least initially, as a quasi-aesthetic matter of proportion and harmony rather than as an ethical problem.

Horace Templeton is a testier, less drolly sympathetic focalizer than Arthur O' Leary—understandably so, since, as the novel's framing apparatus makes clear, he is mortally ill, his travels through Europe occasioned by the search for a cure ('It is a strange thing to begin a 'Log' when the voyage is nigh ended!'; 1). He insists that it is the 'fastidiousness of a sick man and not that most insufferable of all affectations—exclusiveness' that makes him 'lack due tolerance' of mixed company (he is no happier on the steamer from England to the Belgian coast than he is at the Baden *Cursaal*) (3-4), but we need not necessarily be inclined to believe him.

For one thing, a transparently ethical note does soon intrude upon the text's exegesis of *Cursaal* social life, with Templeton rueing the 'demoralizing effect of such *reunions* [as take place at the Baden casino]' upon (almost inevitably) his young countrywomen:

It demands but a very indifferent power of observation to distinguish the English girl for the first time abroad from her who has made repeated visits to foreign watering-places; while even among those who have been habituated to the great world at home, and passed the ordeal of London seasons, there is yet much to learn in the way of cool and self-possessed effrontery, from the habits of Baden and its brethren.

(80)

Again, Lever and his narrator seem at odds—or Templeton is wryer here on the subject of home-Europe comparisons than elsewhere in his diaries. To liken the education in ‘effrontery’ to be had at Baden-Baden to the social *Bildung* on offer to young ladies during a London season is inevitably to cast more trenchant negative light on the latter, familiar quantity than on the former, notorious one.

Alternatively, noting *Horace Templeton*’s publication in Germany by Tauchnitz in the same (revolutionary) year as *The Communist Manifesto* was self-published in London and adopting the latter’s terms, we might choose to see in Templeton’s attack on the social lowness of the *Cursaal* (which contains none of the physiognomic disgust that animates the casino scenes in Trollope’s *Can You Forgive Her?* or even in George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*—see below) the evidence of ‘hidden’ (rather than ‘open’) ideological warfare against the class other (though we might also decide that he is simply casting about for a crotchety explanation for the conduct of modern young women).<sup>11</sup> Either way, by framing the problem of social ‘lowness’ in terms of nefarious influence (coarsening) rather than, as Avenarius does in *The Contemporary Idyll*, seditious threat (the powder-keg model), Lever’s text registers a second key explanation for mid-nineteenth century print culture’s qualms about freedom of association.

Horace Templeton’s morally compromising Baden *Cursaal* might lead us to reflect on the fate of another ‘English girl’, already ‘cool and self-possessed’ by the time she reaches the waters—and the heroine of another spa text of 1848. Here is Thackeray’s fullest evocation of Pumpernickel in *Vanity Fair*:

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<sup>11</sup> See Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2011), p. 64.

Becky liked the life. She was at home with everybody in the place, pedlars, punters, tumblers, students and all. She was of a wild, roving nature, inherited from father and mother, who were both Bohemians, by taste and circumstance; if a lord was not by, she would talk to his courier with the greatest pleasure; the din, the stir, the drink, the smoke, the tattle of the Hebrew pedlars, the solemn, braggart ways of the poor tumblers, the sonorous talk of the gambling-table officials, the songs and swagger of the students, and the general buzz and hum of the place had pleased and tickled the little woman, even when her luck was down and she had not wherewithal to pay her bill.<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere charged with anti-German prejudice, Thackeray, in narrating Becky Sharp's adventures at the spa (and—see below—the exploits of Mogador in *The Kickleburys*), seems able to extract from the resort culture of *Mitteleuropa* a blaze of lively, sensorial arguments in favour of the kind of coming together in which Horace Templeton perceives only malaise.

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Dostoevskii's *The Gambler* also makes the *Spielbank* the focus of a (polyphonic) discourse on social positioning. Arriving at Roulettenburg, General Zagorianskii's wealthy elderly relative, Antonida Vasil'evna, causes a stir not just because she has been widely thought to be close to death, but also because she insists on bringing her peasant servants, Potapych and Marfa, with her into the gaming room. The gesture helps identify her as uncontaminated by the social cant of the general's suite and therefore a potential ally of Aleksei; though, as Joseph Frank has noted and Aleksei's own conduct demonstrates, not being a hypocrite does not necessarily make one a consistent humanitarian—and Antonida Vasil'evna loses all interest in Potapych and Marfa's welfare as her passion for roulette overtakes her.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, pp. 591-592.

<sup>13</sup> Frank, *Dostoevskii: The Miraculous Years*, p. 177.

Aleksei himself, no respecter of the imperative to arrive at a singular construal of, or feeling about, social reality (or, indeed, of the self), simultaneously identifies with and reviles the lowness with which gambling brings him into contact. Although he ‘number[s] himself’ sincerely and wholeheartedly among the mob’ (‘sam iskrenno i dobrosovestno prichisliaet sebia ko vsei etoi svolochi’), he is nonetheless struck by its limits in the sphere of conflict resolution. The passage below has obvious parallels with the extract from Avenarius’s *The Contemporary Idyll* with which I began this chapter (the two novellas were published in the same year):

[T]he mob does indeed play an extremely dirty game. I even have the impression that something like plain robbery goes on at the gaming-table [...] I have noticed, for example, that nothing is more common than for someone’s hand to suddenly reach out and grab for itself what you have won. Then there is an argument, sometimes an uproar and—“I beg that you prove, and produce witnesses to the fact, that the stake is yours”.

[‘Д]ействительно играет очень грязно. Я даже не прочь от мысли, что тут у стола происходит много самого обыкновенного воровства [....] Я заметил, например, что нет ничего обыкновеннее, когда из-за стола протягивается вдруг чья-нибудь рука и берет себе то, что вы выиграли. Начинается спор, нередко крик, и -- прошу покорно доказать, сыскать свидетелей, что ставка ваша!’].

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Four years after Dostoevskii’s and Avenarius’s accounts of grasping proletarians in *The Gambler* and *The Contemporary Idyll*, the *Spielverbot* of 1872 ended gaming at German spas. In a mark of the penetration of the Continental watering place and spa gambling in particular as topics of social interest in the late 1860s and early 1870s, the New York political magazine *Harper’s Weekly* covered the last night of gaming in a long article, complete with illustrations by Sydney Hall, entitled ‘Baden-Baden in Extremis’. Like Avenarius (but in a manner more *de*

*haut en bas*) *Harper's* correspondent pays special attention to the hands of the last-gasp players: 'What a study of hands! Thin, white bejewelled; coarse, loutish hands; nervous hands probing empty pockets [...] the scene was a little ghastly.'<sup>14</sup>

A birthright of even the most beleaguered social subject and an elementary vehicle of capital flow, hands, especially grasping ones, are an effective ideogram for class threat. The proximity of 'loutish hands' to 'white bejewelled' ones here, meanwhile, is both gothic in its incongruity and points up a second play-related double standard (to sit alongside the one that dogs mid-century representations of lady gamblers). Gambling, as J. Jeffrey Franklin notes in his study of Victorian codings of the practice, had for centuries been 'a defining part of a traditional aristocratic ethos [valued as a demonstration of] the ability to win with magnanimity, to lose with dignity and to honour [...] debts'.<sup>15</sup> In a syncretic age whose prevailing social logics no longer restricted the pursuit of surplus value to those constituencies for whom such a pursuit could be assumed to be superfluous, many writers (like the *Harper's* correspondent here) continued to evaluate the morality of gambling on the basis of how decorously and sportively it was conducted. Into what can seem a specialized objection to gambling *in cases of financial need* we may read either (or both) the survival of patrician social mores in an age of accumulation or a (somewhat disingenuous) self-distancing on the part of bourgeois discourse from aleatory modes of acquisition.

One way of framing *Harper's* account of the overstrung atmosphere of the last night of gambling at Baden-Baden ('[E]xtraordinary precautions had been taken by the officials in case of any disorder') might be as a narrative that puts the cap on gambling's fall from social legitimacy. As the evening of the last night of play progresses and 'an unwonted vulgar mob' gathers around the roulette table, the report ratchets up its class enmity:

At a quarter to twelve—midnight was the hour when the possession  
of the establishment passed from the family of Bénazet and

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<sup>14</sup> Unsigned, 'Baden-Baden in Extremis', *Harper's Weekly*, 7 December 1872, pp. 952-3. October 31<sup>st</sup> 1872 saw the end of gambling in Baden-Baden; Wiesbaden & Homburg were reprieved until December 31<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Franklin, *Serious Play*, p. 35.

Dupressoir—a vulgar, dirty little fellow, who had been drinking too freely, having lost a stake of fifty florins on red, seized his stake again, refused to give it up, and showed fight.<sup>16</sup>

But is *Harper's* 'dirty, vulgar little fellow' staging an obdurate last stand or putting on a triumphal performance? The 'midnight hour', at which gambling at Baden-Baden was to cease, might either mark a timely closing of the curtain on a pastime that had come to symbolize arbitrary redistribution or symbolize the twilight insurgency of a new, more raucous social order. (*Harper's* hooligan is either poised to lose his 'stake' or about to enlarge it.) In any event, the figural force of the 'passing' of 'possession of the establishment', if that is how we are to take it, would seem to depend on a false halcyonism. The 'Bénazets, Dupressoirs and Blancs' invoked as representatives of a deposed order of dynastic succession were themselves men of the French commercial classes; Jacques Bénazet's opening of his casino at Baden-Baden after the July Monarchy's closure of the gambling houses of Paris was, and there is some irony here, a venture in the spirit of the unpatrimonial exhortation of the French historian (and minister under Louis Philippe) François Guizot—'enrichissez-vous par le travail et par l'épargne'.<sup>17</sup>

*Harper's* image of 'loutish hands' alongside 'bejewelled ones' might send us back to the opening passage of *Daniel Deronda* (see also Chapter 1). George Eliot, like so many of the writers discussed in this thesis, deploys the *Spielbank* as a venue through which to figure both industrial society's capacity to collocate difference and the awkwardness of the collocation. In a novel about identities inherited and acquired, social lowness emerges as a function of both genotype (physiognomic structure, hair growth) and culture (malnutrition, grooming practices):

About this table fifty or sixty persons were assembled [...] Those who were taking their pleasure at a higher strength, and were absorbed in play, showed very distant varieties of European type: Livonian and Spanish, Graeco-Italian and miscellaneous German,

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<sup>16</sup> *Harper's*, 'Baden-Baden in Extremis', p. 953.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Laurent Theis, *François Guizot* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), p. 433.

English aristocratic and English plebeian. Here certainly was a striking admission of human equality. The white bejewelled fingers of an English countess were very near touching a bony, yellow, crab-like hand stretching a bared wrist to clutch a heap of coin—a hand easy to sort with the square, gaunt face, deep-set eyes, grizzled eyebrows, and ill-combed scanty hair which seemed a slight metamorphosis of the vulture.<sup>18</sup>

‘Admission’, of course, carries a double meaning—being allowed to be present is among the simplest ways of having one’s subjectivity acknowledged or recognized; it is precisely this which is denied to Dostoevskii’s Marfa and Potapych at Roulettenburg. But Eliot’s biographer Nancy Henry finds her subject ‘critical, satirical’ and ‘ironic’ in her meditation on ‘human equality’ here—and the players at the casino at Leubronn to represent an ‘effete and dissipated cross section’ of contemporary democratic society.<sup>19</sup>

I find a somewhat gentler wryness, and Eliot, whose idea of society Tim Dolin has glossed as ‘the totality of felt relationships that individuals share with those around them’, to be offering universal indulgence in vice as an (albeit thin and regrettable) basis for sympathy in an atomized world.<sup>20</sup> Equality of opportunity—understood as the absence, in a post-feudal order, of legal obstacles to a cat looking at a queen or a ‘yellow’ hand touching a ‘bejewelled’ one—too easily becomes, not least through its incorporation within an ideology of meritocracy, a rhetorical excuse for the endurance of the status quo. Eliot, because she does not believe in the possibility or desirability of equality of opportunity, is persistently in the market in her fiction for other kinds of connectedness.

Equality of passion—the rapprochement of ‘high’ and ‘low’ taste and leisure practice in the context of a generalized cultural *Gleichschaltung* (‘making-same’)—seems a more plausible basis for solidarity, offering a (faint, sad) likeness of Christian ecumenism. Shared transgressions grant the prospect of shared redemption (casino gambling is at least an uncontestatory practice in the sense

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<sup>18</sup> *Daniel Deronda*, 1, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Henry, *George Eliot: A Critical Biography* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 210.

<sup>20</sup> Dolin, *George Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 112.

that players square up to the odds—and the bank—rather than each other), undermining the adversarial sociological conception of human relations—fostered by various strands of the nineteenth-century social thought—to which Eliotian (not to mention Dickensian) realism is an important reproach.

Why, lingering on Eliot's opening to *Daniel Deronda*, are concupiscent instincts 'easy to sort' with bestial features? Twenty-first century moral psychology offers the suggestion that judgements about character are frequently made involuntarily on the basis of a physiological reaction (such as disgust) and that 'moral reasoning [thus] amounts to post-hoc rationalization.'<sup>21</sup> Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytically inflected theory of abjection, on the other hand, suggests that the unassimilable proximity of a carnally driven 'not-I' engenders both desire and repulsion and in doing so helps shore up the social and moral subjectivity of the respectable observer. *Harper's* 'dirty little fellow' and Eliot's human vulture are in this reading conceptually indispensable Others. They make an impact, moreover, not simply because of their ugliness but because of their refusal to play the game by the rules: for Kristeva, 'it is [...] not lack of cleanliness or health' that engenders abjection but 'what disturbs identity, system, order'.<sup>22</sup>

It is worth recalling at this point the experience, described in Chapter 3, of Alice Vavasor and Glencora Palliser at the tables of Baden-Baden in Anthony Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* Alice 'literally trembl[es]' as Glencora lays down her gold coin, in part because she senses many eyes upon her:

The women especially were staring at [Alice]—those horrid women with vermilion cheeks, and loud bonnets half off their heads, and hard, shameless eyes, and white gloves, which, when taken off in the ardour of the game, disclosed dirty hands. They stared at her with that fixed stare which such women have [...].<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>See Lukes, *Moral Relativism*, p. 47. Colin McGinn sees disgust as the most 'aesthetic' among 'aversive' emotions, directed as it is towards the phenomenal qualities or *Sosein* rather than the essential being or *Dasein* of the disgusting object. See McGinn, *The Meaning of Disgust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3; 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 4.



Trollope's *rouge-et-noir* women enact a euphemistic parody of coitus ('bonnets half off'; 'white gloves [...] taken off'; 'ardour'; 'dirty hands'). Their 'fixed stare' prompts *demi-mondaine* associations, most obviously with Manet's *Olympia* (1865), exhibited in Paris as *Can You Forgive Her?* was being published in London and Leipzig and at the vanguard of a less circumlocutory realism than Trollope's.

What can such a look mean? In Manet's painting, Olympia's stare has often been read as indicative of a challenging self-possession. But this kind of being-without-shame (as distinct from 'shamelessness') is hardly part of Anthony Trollope's ethical lexicon when it comes to women. A gaze of reproach, meanwhile (hinting at Alice's structural complicity in their position) would imply a concrete, structurally determined social relationship between *Can You Forgive Her?*'s heroine and the roulette women of Baden-Baden that the text does not allow. Trollope's *déclassé* female gamblers seem designed rather to steady the course of class and gender relations than to disrupt it. As Kristeva's theory of abjection suggests, what 'disturbs order' can also, in the same action, reinforce it. We might, accordingly, assign the roulette women an imaginary or intrapsychic self-disciplinary function, their 'fixed stare' being more properly Alice's projection of 'fixed' fates onto 'such women' as them. Construing a latticework of gazes (Glencora looks—titillated—at the gambling; Alice looks—fearfully—at the gambling and at Glencora's looking; the gambling women look—enigmatically—back at Alice), Trollope, like Viazemskii in 'Baden-Baden', here stresses the prophetic—and aversive—kind of seeing over the sort that might conceivably engender rapprochement with the other.

### The Spa-Venu

'As early as the 1870s, a fashionable hunt [...] had a Liverpool shipping merchant as master', notes David Cannadine in *The Decline and Fall of the British*

*Aristocracy*.<sup>24</sup> ‘A month ago she had no-one but her washer-woman, and now I am told that the cards of Roman princesses are on her table’, gossips Madame Grandioni about Christina Light in James’s *Roderick Hudson*.<sup>25</sup> A classic narrative symptom of solidity melting into air is the meteorism of the parvenu, a heavily freighted figure since at least Molière’s *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* but especially so in the context of the mid-nineteenth century’s vexed social conjuncture. As Sarah Sasson has observed in a study paying particular attention to Balzac’s social climbers, the parvenu is ‘a sociological phenomenon forged by capitalistic development and social upheaval, and a symbol of the great threat posed by modernity’.<sup>26</sup>

*Arrivisme* is a phenomenon of suspension that aspires to its own *rature*: to have truly ‘arrived’, is to be no longer recognizable as a parvenu. Going places, moreover, often means going to the right places; and in travel narratives from Sterne (in the *Sentimental Journey*) to Twain (see below), the planning of physical itineraries is the (often comically coded) correlate of diverse ventures in social positioning. Proust’s narrator in *Le Côté de Guermantes* recounts the ‘pilgrimage from one thermal spa to another’ (‘pérégrinations d’une «station» thermale à une autre’) undertaken by the petty-bourgeois parents of an ailing adolescent girl; the devotional figure, appropriate since many spas were *ci-devant* holy sites, speaks to solicitude for a beloved child, but also marks an offering (especially since the girl dies) at the altar of a burgeoning class convention. For Proust’s aspirational provincials, taking the waters amounts to ‘a kind of luxury as if [they] had owned race-horses or a country manner house’ (‘une espèce de luxe, comme s’ils avaient eu des chevaux de courses, un château’).<sup>27</sup> Distinction being naturally an affair of small but crucial margins, not any spa would do. Kissingen, reported the *Saturday Review* in 1879, might offer a more rigorous cure than other, more famous watering places, but, the paper

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<sup>24</sup>See David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 361.

<sup>25</sup> Miss Light will end up, in another novel, as the Princess Casamassima.

<sup>26</sup> Sasson, *Longing to Belong: The Parvenu in Nineteenth-Century French and German Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Proust, *The Guermantes Way*, pp. 329-30; for original see Tadie (ed.), 2, p. 377.

suggests, a visit there would confer little social advantage since the resort was principally frequented by ‘second-rate Germans’.<sup>28</sup>

Both Burkhard Fuh’s mammoth German-language history of spa culture and Heikki Lempa’s microhistory of nineteenth-century Bad Pyrmont testify to the changing social composition of Continental spas and extrapolate outward toward general trends.<sup>29</sup> Lempa’s study records a ‘statistical shift in favour of the bourgeoisie’ in the 1860s and a simultaneous influx of ‘peasants’ and Jews, noting that what had once been a ‘blue-blooded’ resort became at mid-century ‘an arena for social intercourse between the nobility, burghers (or bourgeoisie) and peasants’.<sup>30</sup> But Lempa is ultimately sceptical about whether this ‘culture of social asymmetry’ implied very much meaningful mixing, finding strong evidence of ‘social segregation’.<sup>31</sup> The Pyrmont physician Theodor Menke’s claim that his practice attracted a ‘diverse and numerous crowd, in which a prince and a beggar, rich and poor, wise and madman are gathered to drink from the common fountain that recognizes no rank and class difference’ reads like a piece of salesmanship, its rhetorical thrust similar to the kind increasingly offered by John Murray after mid-century (see below).<sup>32</sup>

The (putative) vulgarization of elite preserves admitted a variety of response in the mainstream of Victorian literary culture, with by no means all writers wringing their hands. In *The Kickleburys on the Rhine*, Thackeray’s Mr. Titmarsh greets social change at spa resorts wistfully rather than fearfully: ‘Is it not curious to think that the King of Trumps now virtually reigns in this place, and has deposed the other dynasty?’<sup>33</sup> Later, Titmarsh makes inter-class encounter the occasion for a farcical moment of misrecognition. Returning home from Rougetnoirbourg via the French resort of Aix-La-Chapelle (now the German town of Aachen), Lady Kicklebury is pleased to find herself sharing a railway carriage with ‘Madame la Princesse de Mogador’, whom she has ‘had the pleasure

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Homburg and Kissingen’, *Saturday Review*, p. 294.

<sup>29</sup> Fuh’s study is *Mondane Orte einer vornehmen Gesellschaft: Kultur und Geschichte der Kurstädte 1700-1900* (New York: Olms, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> Lempa, pp. 45-53.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72; 54.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> *The Kickleburys*, p. 69.

of meeting [...] at Rougetnoirbourg.' But the princess's conduct is not quite *comme il faut*:

[O]ne of the bearded gentlemen [...] said, "Veux-tu fumer, Mogador?" and the princess actually took a cigar and began to smoke [...] Lady Kicklebury was aghast, and trembled; and presently Lord Talboys burst into a loud fit of laughter. [...] "Excuse me, Lady Kicklebury, but I can't help it," he said. "You've been talking to your opposite neighbor—she don't understand a word of English—and calling her princess and highness, and she's no more a princess than you or I. She is a little milliner [...] and she dances at Mabile and Chateau Rouge."<sup>34</sup>

A cigar, sometimes just a cigar, is a disjunctive signifier when clamped between delicate female jaws. The 'little milliner's' imposture, which seems harmless enough to Titmarsh and Lord Talboys, makes Lady Kicklebury 'tremble' (like Alice in *Can You Forgive Her?*). Apart from a relaxed and rueful narratorial attitude to a disorienting class conjuncture, the above passage offers three significant entries into how Victorian culture coded social mixing.

First—the issue is usually heavily gendered. Lady Kicklebury's alarm and Lord Talboys' jocularly mark the adaptability and urbanity of conduct credited to upper-class male subjectivity and the unitariness and literalism ascribed to women of the same rank. Aristocratic males toggle jauntily between disparate modes of sociability—elite-respectable, homosocial, *demi-mondaine*; ladies have no such room to range. Conversely, among the lower classes, it is women who are the chameleons—see, for a more threatening version of Mogador, the shipborne adventuress Euphemia Smith from Trollope's *John Caldigate* (see Chapter 2, fn. 43)—and men who lack the potential for elevation. (Women succeed in part thanks to the patronage of the aforementioned aristocratic male, who, hooked by their sexual appeal, can assist in the transformation of their dress and manners.)

Second, the *proteanness* of the class interloper, who for the reasons just outlined is customarily a woman, accounts for much of the alarm she occasions. Mogador, who might conceivably serve Lady Kicklebury in her day job as a

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 82-83.

milliner, doubtless ‘serves’ men like Lord Talboys in her evening work as a dancer at the Jardin Mabille (this may be why he recognises her). Such multiformity presents a challenge to apprehension and appraisal—but the shapeshifting social climber can be also be a source of comic incongruity and pathos once the poverty of her motives and the paucity of her symbolic means is ‘unmasked’ (this [is] Mrs. Trollope’s strategy in *The Robertses on Their Travels*—see below).

Thirdly, Paris is the paradigmatic space for mid-nineteenth-century scenarios of social flux—and the Continental spa is its proxy. Lord Talboys invokes the Mabille, a *café-concert* and dance pavilion near the Champs-Élysées and something of a byword for immoral amusements in mid-century English print culture, and the Château Rouge, a similar venue near Montmartre where the company consisted, according to an 1866 Murray’s guide, of ‘students, the better class of workman, and grisettes’. <sup>35</sup> All symbolic roads from Rougetnoirbourg—and from Baden-Baden and Wiesbaden—ultimately lead to the French capital

Around mid-century, then, many—particularly male—writers appear sanguine about social mixing at Continental spas. An air of clubbiness hangs over some of their reasons. Horace Templeton, as sentimentally fitful a narrator as Lever’s Charles Lever and, significantly, not extending his disapproval of the *Cursaal* to less drastic kinds of interstratal encounter, celebrates spa resorts for increasing the access of literary and other bourgeois professionals to high society—and vice versa: ‘My Lord refreshes in the society of a clever barrister, or an amusing essayist of the ‘Quarterly’. The latter puts forth all his agreeability for the delectation of a grander audience than he ever had at home’ (*HT*, 95). Meanwhile, Murray’s guides, tactfully in view of the demographic they largely served, played up the Leverian idea that spa resorts could be invigorating sites of inter-stratal congress:

Festivity and forgetfulness of care are the general order of the day. State and ceremony and titled hauteur are in a great degree thrown aside in the easy intercourse of the bathing place; all ranks meet at the balls, the concerts, the saloons and the wells. The prince and the

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<sup>35</sup> Murray’s *Handbook for Visitors to Paris* (London: John Murray, 1866), p. 62.

tradesman lay down their stakes side-by-side at the Rouge-et-Noir table. A princess does not disdain a donkey-ride in the mountains, and a sovereign duke may be seen at the table d'hôte side by side with a merchant or subaltern officer.<sup>36</sup>

*Pace* Murray's guides, and in the context of much more complex domestic arrangements than the opposition 'prince'/'tradesman' admits, literary encounters between the classes at foreign resorts were often sooner the occasion for mortification than 'festivity'. Mark Twain, describing in *A Tramp Abroad* the meeting at Baden-Baden between an uptight minister and the son of 'an extensive dealer in horses' [see also Fig. 11], finds comedy in the disjunction between the two parties' criteria for identification. The horse dealer's son is delighted to have laid eyes on a fellow American ('Sho! I spotted you for MY kind the minute I heard your clack. You been over here long?'). [But even] a 'most gentle, refined, and sensitive' clergyman cannot but 'wince' and 'shr[i]nk, a little, in his clothes' at being harassed into an expression of patriotically inscribed fellow feeling by such a 'rough gem'.<sup>37</sup>

In this light, the Bohemia-born American journalist Francis (Franz) J. Grund's insistence that 'a [Continental] watering-place (*sic*) is a sort of neutral territory: rank, title and distinction are left at home' reads either like wishful thinking or as reflecting a desire to have Germany, the land of his birth, seem to accommodate the proclaimed values of his adopted home land. In any event, Grund holds out only the prospect of a temporary levity, 'the principle being well established that you may eat, drink, play, talk and dance with a person at a watering-place, without being obliged ever to recognize the person again, and least of all to do so in London [...]'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Murray's Handbook* (1870), p. 227.

<sup>37</sup> *A Tramp Abroad*, pp. 191-195.

<sup>38</sup> Francis J. Grund, 'Original Sketches: Baden-Baden', *The New World*, 2 January 1843, p. 33-36 (p. 33).



Figure 11: Put I' There, *A Tramp Abroad* (via Project Gutenberg)

Foreign resorts, as we have seen in this chapter and the last, are commonly settings in which nineteenth-century writers seek to reflect on the *patria* (and sometimes to settle domestic scores). Edmund Yates marks in his 1864 interview with Thomas Cook his personal distaste for the lower middle-class 'roysters' thronging European resorts in high summer, expressing relief that 'the July and September excursionists differ greatly: ushers and governesses, practical people from the provinces, and representatives of the better style of the London mercantile community'.<sup>39</sup>

Such expressions of ambivalence about the democratization of opportunity—and specifically the freedom to occupy space—are characteristic of the 1860s, the locus classicus probably being Matthew Arnold's questioning, in the context of the protests that had greeted the defeat in parliament of Gladstone's 1866 Reform Bill, of the worth of a rights-based politics in a post-feudal age (Arnold is uncomfortable with what he sees as the creeping assumption of 'an Englishman's right to do what he likes; his right to march where he likes; meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes. All this, I say, tends to anarchy...').<sup>40</sup> Further up the social scale, anxiety about a deluge fostered reactions that can read like hallucinatory hyperbole. The former British foreign secretary Lord Clarendon wrote from Wiesbaden in 1861 that '[t]his place is overflowing [...] every day carriages full of folk are sent away [...] the travellers moan [...] that they would sleep anywhere in the 93 degree heat'.<sup>41</sup> Lord Clarendon's report echoes domestic anxieties, invoked in a study by Lara Baker Whelan, about the 'invasion' of public parks and suburb gardens by raucous underclass elements.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Yates, 'My Excursion Agent', p. 303.

<sup>40</sup> Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by Jane Garnett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 56-57.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Richard Mullen and James Munson, *The Smell of the Continent: The British Discover Europe, 1814-1914* (London: Macmillan, 2009), p. 231.

<sup>42</sup> See Lara Baker Whelan, *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 39-42.



Yet, curiously, among nineteenth-century resort narratives one of the most hostile toward *arrivisme* is a novel by a writer whose own authorship has frequently been read as emblematic of the installation, in the mid-nineteenth century, of fiction writing as a remunerative and respectable bourgeois profession. The reputation of Anthony's mother Frances Trollope (1779-1863), an extremely popular writer in her lifetime, suffered in twentieth-century criticism, where she is frequently represented as an author of potboilers obsessively preoccupied with the lucrateness of her trade. She is currently the object of a critical repositioning as an innovative, 'genre-mixing' popular author.<sup>43</sup> But the class chauvinism that it is difficult to avoid in *The Robertses on Their Travels* (and, up to a point, in her best-known work, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832)) makes her a somewhat awkward candidate for reclamation.

The author of the anti-poverty novel *Michael Armstrong, Factory Boy* (1840), the anti-slavery novels *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* (1836) and *The Barnabys in America* (1843) and for a time an inhabitant of the Scottish-born abolitionist Fanny Wright's utopian Nashoba Commune (*Domestic Manners* was written off the back of this sojourn), Mrs. Trollope is not easily painted as a social reactionary. Yet some of her fiction can be read as part of what, in the Victorian context, was a sustained, and in many ways more fearful, class discourse than that which treats of grizzled proletarians. Mill's 'collective mediocrity', Anthony Trollope's sense of 'the old place [...] a-tumblin' about all our ears': such locutions give expression to what was sooner a fear of general coarsening than of anarchy; and literary campaigns on behalf of benighted social subjects (slaves, factory boys) did not preclude a more protective attitude toward other manifestations of actually-existing inequity.<sup>44</sup>

I want to suggest *The Robertses on their Travels*—which I read below with a focus on its Baden-Baden sections—and its author as a case study in the methodology and poetics of intra-bourgeois positioning in the context of an

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<sup>43</sup> An exception has generally been made for *Domestic Manners*. See Tamara Wagner, 'Beyond *Domestic Manners*: Repositioning Frances Trollope in Literary History', in *Frances Trollope: Beyond Domestic Manners*, ed. by Wagner (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1-14.

<sup>44</sup> See Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), ed. by Gertrude Himmelfarb (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 131; Trollope, *John Caldigate*, p. 23.

increasingly opaque class conjuncture. Mrs. Trollope appears at times in *The Robertses*, the story of an English banker's family out to improve their prospects on the Continent, to be turning her literary praxis to the service of a pulling-up of the ladder. But her methods, if it is reasonable so to gloss her motivations, are curious: *The Robertses* reads as a sustained feat of intersubjective identification with the objects of its satire—but an identification working to hold their aspirations at bay. Thackeray's opinion of his contemporary was that Frances Trollope, 'having very little, except prejudice, on which to found an opinion [...] makes up for want of argument by a wonderful fluency of abuse'.<sup>45</sup> The protagonists of her watering-place novel, however, are mostly made to condemn themselves out of their own mouths.

Frances Trollope's preface represents the novel as a salutary—and empirically grounded—reproach to English misbehaviour on the Continent:

In recently looking over a miscellaneous collection of old travelling notes, made at various times, and in various lands, I found such constantly repeated expressions of regret and vexation at the effect produced on the minds of all foreigners by the strange, and often offensive, manners of many among the multitudes of English travellers who thronged their cities, that I almost felt remorse at never having made public some of the offences and absurdities which had come under my own observation [...].

(1; 2)

Mrs. Trollope's ultimate referent, however, like the Robertses' in leaving for Europe in the first place, is domestic. Mrs. Roberts, a middle-aged matriarch whose 'once fine complexion ha[s] deepened into a coarser tint' (1; 9)—such (and they are frequent) ostensibly sympathetic *obiter dicta* mask uneasily what is ultimately a poetics of excoriation—coerces her husband, a henpecked banker with a minor firm and a 'third class English gentleman' (2; 236), into winding up his London affairs and indulging her 'long-cherished wish to visit the continent'

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<sup>45</sup> From his review of Mrs. Trollope's *The Vicar of Wrexhill*. Cited in Helen Heinemann, *Frances Trollope* (Boston: Twayne, 1984), p. 52.

(1; 11). (This in a narrative that casts her repeatedly (1; 112 and 2; 98, 224, 228), as the ‘manager’ of her family’s affairs.) She has conceived the trip as part of a utilitarian calculus designed to propel the Robertses, and particularly their three children, into high society, being convinced that the ‘cheapness of living abroad’ (v.1; 9)—an enduring truism—will, coupled with training in key social arts (‘Modern languages and waltzing’) (1: 12), help them toward a smooth social ascent.

Following this commercial logic—the logic of weights and balances—the Robertses first of all make for Paris, (where, a decade earlier, Mrs. Trollope, in the travel memoir *Paris and the Parisians* (1836), had reported her own ‘satisfaction at finding herself on terms of most pleasant and familiar intercourse with a variety of very delightful people, many of them highly distinguished’).<sup>46</sup> No ordinance forbids such a move and no sentinel will turn them back; they are even able to procure introductions and settle in a favoured *arrondissement*. But an insurmountable lack of *savoir faire* (which in the case of the parvenu is inseparable from a lack of *savoir vivre*) scuppers their scheme to break into respectable Parisian circles. (Most damningly, they fail to crack their milliner’s credit system.) So they proceed to Baden-Baden.

Why the spa? English periodical culture of the 1870s—though I have not found similar sentiments in the context of the 1840s—offers a suggestion:

At such places as Ems and the various bathing-springs abroad, acquaintances are easily formed. Even if they are not always unexceptionable, they serve to pass the time; and when you leave, you are not likely ever to meet your friends of the summer again.<sup>47</sup>

In 1879, the same year as the above advice (addressed, evidently to a genteel audience) was published in *Chambers’ Journal*, the *Saturday Review*, speaking to a different kind of reader, likened Homburg and Kissingen to Brighton—that is, a kind of London with the punctilios unclenched, where ‘in a good humoured

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<sup>46</sup> *Paris and the Parisians in 1835*, 2 vols (Paris: Baudry’s European Library, 1836), 1, pp. 23-24.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Ems and Its Summer Visitors’, *Chambers’s Journal*, p. 403.

moment of *abandon* one may get a half-invitation to a dinner' at the home of a social superior.<sup>48</sup>

But the Robertses' entrance into Baden-Baden, 'covered in dust' in an overpacked veterino carriage ('as if we were strolling players', laments daughter Agatha) (1; 297), prefigures more frustration in their attempt to arrive socially. The family reach the resort, where they are to spend the entirety of the novel's second volume,

just at the hour when its cosmopolite population begin to display their many-coloured wings, in order to see and be seen, for the next twelve hours, under all the various aspects that pleasure can devise. The spectacle was at once horrific and enchanting.

(1; 296)

Horror at the glaring gap between the current status of the self and the accomplishments aspired to, enchantment with the prospect of bridging it: Baden-Baden in all its midday finery is to the parvenu mind a vision sublime. But son Edward demonstrates the inadequacy of his breeding to a sight inviting such an elevated emotional response by 'utter[ing] a very unseemly word indeed' (1; 299). The Robertses will spend the rest of their time at the baths demonstrating that the business they came there to do—the business of calculated self-elevation—is untransactable.

At Baden-Baden, Mrs. Trollope's narrative rhetoric advances by juxtaposition. The Robertses' 'ward'—the family has taken her on for mercenary reasons but Mrs. Roberts is adamant she not be awarded the vulgar title of 'boarder'—is Bertha Harrington, the niece of a peer's wife. Having raptly admired Paris and Antwerp Cathedral (as per the norms of aesthetic appreciation transmitted through Murray's guide books among other *loci*—and while her 'friends' were engaged in social 'manoeuvrings'; 2; 1) and outstripped the Robertses in terms of facility in French, Bertha ('who already knew pretty nearly as much about this celebrated bathing-place as ordinary books could teach her',

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<sup>48</sup> 'Homburg & Kissingen', *Saturday Review*, p. 293.

2; 5) continues to demonstrate the superiority of her disposition upon the party's arrival at the baths. A mark of her untutored distinction is her 'enthusiastic love for the beauties of nature' (2; 3)—and, again while the Robertses jostle for position, she responds instinctively to what is best about the spa:

[T]he eyes of Bertha Harrington, caught by the picturesque ruins of the Alt Schloss [Baden-Baden's medieval castle], were not only wide open, and unshaded by any contrivance whatever, but thrown up in eager admiration of the scene on which they had fixed themselves[...].

(1; 301)

In Bertha's condescending and uncomprehending treatment at the hands of the Robertses (' "That girl"' thought [Mrs. Roberts], "is more than half an idiot [...]") (2; 8), we might discern a faint echo of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Ugly Duckling' (1843), which Frances Trollope is unlikely to have encountered but whose rendition of grace under fire then triumphant is an ideological paradigm for nineteenth-century bourgeois narratives that lay stress on the triumph over misrecognition of (naturalized) good character.

Indeed, it is frequently tempting to read Mrs. Trollope's own awkward class position into *The Robertses on Their Travels*' social rhetorics. Of an insecure middle-class background—her father was a vicar but the son of a tradesman, her mother the daughter of an fashionable apothecary—her literary output seems to me to reflect three not straightforwardly compatible preoccupations: a groundbreaking interest in questioning the relationship between status and quality (her campaigning novels, angry in their advocacy of reform, make her an important precursor of Dickens); a strong feeling for the difficulty of wielding money and virtue at the same time; *and* a fixation upon vulgarity of conduct that, while probably informed by the accusations of poor manners levelled *at* her throughout her career by critics such as Thackeray, too

frequently serves to prop up what Franco Moretti calls 'bourgeois *legitimacy*: the idea of a ruling class that doesn't just rule, but *deserves* to do so'.<sup>49</sup>

If Bertha offers the Robertses an object lesson in modesty and, naturalness—her good nature is put down to 'Providence' (2; 1), though the relationship between this divine circumstance and her being an 'heiress' (2; 58) is not explored—it goes largely unlearned. But some members of Mrs. Trollope's parvenu clan—though decisively *not* Mrs. Roberts—do at least display at the baths a certain refinement of the tufthunter's art. Agatha, apparently sharpened by her embarrassments in Paris, begins to read like a prototype of Thackeray's Becky Sharp, who, as Margaret Cohen has noted, 'pursu[es] self-advancement through a deft, remorseless application of the techniques mastered by the perfect young lady.'<sup>50</sup> Unlike her mother, an obtuse utilitarian whose 'theoretical economy' (1; 308) founders badly at the baths, Agatha understands something of the complexity of the relationship between symbolic and literal capital. The pair quarrel about how best to deploy the latter at Baden-Baden, with Mrs. Roberts aghast at her daughter's insistence that they should check into the most expensive rooms available:

"But, Agatha, how is it possible that you can call the very handsomest lodging we have seen in the whole place the cheapest?" Why they asked three hundred francs a month for it, my dear. I really believe you do not know what you are talking about"[...] "Oh yes, I do, ma'am. I beg your pardon, but I know perfectly well what I am talking about. The Balcony House is three hundred francs a month, and the little hole of a cottage that you talk of is one hundred and fifty, and such being their respective rents, my opinion most decidedly is, that the Balcony House is the cheaper of the two."

(1; 312)

As Agatha, in a narrative gesture figuring an intergenerational refinement of the parvenu's craft, seeks to hone her mother's schemes, her father—Mrs. Roberts's

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<sup>49</sup> Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, p. 20

<sup>50</sup> Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, p. 13.

husband—is coming upon an important realization. The drift of his epiphany—which is soon strangled —is that social climbing is less a war against unjust exclusion than a war against the self: “Why, in Heaven's name, wife, should you set us all up for a family of fashion? How can a London banker's family, with seven hundred a year, ever be mistaken for any such thing?” (1; 327). Yet the charade goes on for another several hundred pages; and, like those young men in Balzac's Paris who endure poverty in order to pay for the clothes to get them noticed at the best salons, the Robertses live out a purgatorial existence at Baden-Baden.

Language (as the Robertses' 'ward/boarder' controversy attests) and space are key battlegrounds in campaigns of social positioning, Pierre Bourdieu being the key theorist of such symbolic struggles in a twentieth-century context. Wretched French (“Avez vous aucun papier de nouvelles dans la maison?”) (1; 65) has already done for the Robertses at Paris (*‘good things can be said in no other idiom with such grace’*, writes Mrs. Trollope in *Paris and the Parisians*, before explicitly associating the ‘assiduous cultivation of good French’ with an improvement in ‘[English] national manners’).<sup>51</sup> At Baden-Baden, apprised of ‘the celibacy of one English lord, two ditto Irish, three baronets, and a very fair sprinkling of minor treasures in the same available condition’ (2; 11), Mrs. Roberts has the family adopt the ersatz surname Fitzherbert-Roberts (“Why, you did not suppose, did you, that I intended to go on everlastingly to the end of time with the name of Roberts, with nothing in nature to help it, except just what I could do myself in the way of setting it off?” (2; 53). The decision bespeaks an effort to bottle the genius of social success—as does the Roberts daughters’ pedantic parroting of upper-class feminine gesturalty:

They had learned, amongst other minauderies, to receive the salutations of all the gentlemen whom they particularly wished to attract, with no demonstrations of delight more obvious to the ordinary looker-on than a little nod of the head.

(2; 60)

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<sup>51</sup> *Paris and the Parisians*, pp. 23-24.

Yet (unbeknownst to the Robertses) Continental resort culture was in the same period acquiring a reputation for defrosting elite norms. The Tory opinion-maker *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* advised in 1856 that the rule at spas was 'on ne se gêne pas' ('one doesn't make a fuss [about one's appearance]'), the *New York Times* in 1857 that 'incognito is the rule and not the exception'; while by 1879, the *Saturday Review* was reporting that 'the visitors of most assured position are those who spend the least on their dress. The extravagant at Homburg are the pushing *parvenus* who always travel in the wake of their betters'.<sup>52</sup> As for body language, so for speech: it is the mark of a 'gamester' (and of the courtesan) to affect the language of the 'hupper suckles' [upper circles], observed Bernard Becker in the *Fortnightly* in 1884.<sup>53</sup> Against the idea that not showing off only works when everyone knows who you are anyway, Lord Lynberry, prime target of the Roberts girls' 'minauderies' and 'generous, thoughtless, good *natured*' (2. 218; my italics), prefers Bertha—who, as we have already seen, is 'unshaded by contrivance'.

The *table d'hôte*, so productive a figural space in spa narratives, is another scene of perplexity for Mrs. Trollope's *parvenus*. Mrs. Roberts 'colours violently' when asked whether she intends to 'patronise a table d'hôte or dine à la carte'. Her first concern is for the price of the latter, but her anxiety also exposes her social inexperience and ineptitude:

[S]he knew no more than the man in the moon whether it would be more *bon-ton* to reply with a little *hauteur* "at home [...] most assuredly" or, "at the table d'hôte, mon cher" or, "à la carte, beyond all doubt." However paradoxical it may appear, it was her habit of prompt and authoritative decision, which now rendered it so difficult for her to reply at all.

(2; 83-84)

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<sup>52</sup> Unsigned, 'Baden-Baden: Table & Other Talk There', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 1 November 1856, pp. 604-12 (p. 607); *New York Times*, 'Foreign Intelligence', p. 10; 'Homburg and Kissingen', *Saturday Review*, p. 293.

<sup>53</sup> 'Games and Gamesters', *Fortnightly*, 13 July 1884, pp. 75-87 (p. 82).



‘Prompt and authoritative decision’: a Weberian trait that can unlock many doors but is useless or counterproductive when it comes to the judgment of social tone—an embodied, intuitive capacity, inaccessible through ratiocination. As Agatha understands, Mrs. Roberts fails less by being unable to give a ‘point-blank answer’ (2; 88) than by attempting to do so in the first place. As Proust demonstrates throughout *À la recherche du temps perdu* but particularly in *Le côté de Guermantes*, sketching a place for oneself in high society is rather like trying to represent it: the canvas will rip if too much crude pressure is applied. Mrs. Roberts’ insistence that “I shall soon get into the way of it” (2; 91) represents the wrong (too plodding, too deductive) approach and proves that she will not. In Mrs. Trollope’s mystificatory ethical economy, effort precludes success; seigneurial merit is predicated on a Shaftesburyan—or perhaps more properly an Epicurean—imperturbability.

The Robertses miss the mark at Baden-Baden, although not before Edward has squandered a large sum at the gambling table (the problem here being not the loss—quite in the run of elite social conduct—but his unsanguine response). As they depart to try their luck in Rome, Mrs. Roberts conceives a (doomed) plan that not only confirms her ‘excessive folly’ (2; 87) but also chimes with the peculiar hybridization of genres through which the narrative constructs the family’s social quest: she will force Bertha Harrington, who has come unexpectedly into her inheritance, to marry Edward. The evolution of what eventually amounts to a farcical kidnap plot sets up the Robertses as parodic knights-errant—with ‘errant’ understood in its moral sense. Sasson has observed the habit in nineteenth-century narratives of deploying the ‘motif of conquest’ in narrating the social progress of the parvenu—and Mrs. Trollope first characterizes Baden-Baden as a ‘picturesque defile’ (1; 296).<sup>54</sup> But such chivalric—or anti-chivalric—overtones sit ill at ease with Mrs. Roberts’s grimly goal-directed thinking. The qualities that Weber, in *Economy and Society* (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 1921), gathers under the rubric *Zweckrationalität* represent an efficient means to survival, self-enrichment and even a certain

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<sup>54</sup> Sasson, *Longing to Belong*, p. 105.

amount of social success—they have taken the Robertses ‘from their residence in Bloomsbury square—Bloomsbury suffered from a slightly slummy image in the 1840s—to a good house in a more fashionable part of the town’—but industry, like villainy, gasps in the upper air.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, *The Robertses on their Travels* also reflects a tendency of Victorian fiction (touched upon in the first half of my thesis) to represent long sojourns on the Continent as evidence of faulty character. In *East Lynne* Ellen Wood sends such people to the sea bathing resort of Boulogne-sur-Mer, pocketing the difference between their deficiencies in the sphere of conduct and their impecuniousness:

“All sorts of people come over here: some respectable, and from respectable motives; others the contrary. Some of these men, going by now, are here because they have kites flying in England [...] The worse a man’s conduct has been at home, the more assurance he puts on abroad, and is the first to rush and proclaim his arrival at the consulate. To hear these men boast, we might deem that they were millionaires in England, and had led the lives of saints.”<sup>56</sup>

The Robertses themselves will soon have ‘kites’—bills of credit—‘flying’ at home: their trip to the Continent has been predicated on Mrs. Roberts’s ownership of railway shares—which collapsed in value during the Panic of 1847. *The Economist* blamed the Railway Mania that preceded the panic upon the ‘undue desire for wealth which pervades the middle classes’.<sup>57</sup> In Frances Trollope’s estimation it is rather her mania for social locomotion than a (somewhat naturalized and deproblematized) interest in enrichment that condemns the parvenue, a figure she intuitively reads, like its pole—unforced value (represented in the novel by Bertha Harrington)—as female.

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<sup>55</sup> On Weber and *Zweckrationalität*, see Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, p. 39.

<sup>56</sup> *East Lynne*, 1, p. 305. Lady Isabel Carlyle is aghast to hear of such people. But her extra-marital affair with Francis Levison is met with three sanctions: a disfiguring train crash; the loss of her child; and, like the exiles of Boulogne-sur-Mer, the loss of her good name. In her misery she takes up a governess’s position at the (fictional) German spa of Stalkenberg.

<sup>57</sup> Cited in John R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 29.

## Conclusions

*Pace* Eliot's 'admission of human equality' and the narratives of threat discussed in this chapter—although the latter might, after all, be considered party to it—there is considerable historical evidence to suggest that the story of Continental resort culture in the nineteenth century is also a story of *concerted exclusionary strategy*. At Baden-Baden the Conversation House had been deemed 'privilegium exclusivum' ('exclusive privilege') by 1805, while a *Promenadeordnung* (a kind of civic ordinance regulating public areas) laid down 'standards of proper conduct' in outdoor resort spaces and 'provid[ed] for their enforcement by duly appointed bailiffs.' The 'Armenbad' or 'poor bath' was relocated in the 1830s because 'impoverished and unsightly patients [had become] upsetting incongruities in the refined atmosphere of the curing district'. In 1838, 'commoners' were officially forbidden from entering the gaming halls, restaurants and the resort park. Stringent dress codes prevailed until World War Two.<sup>58</sup> Such barriers to admission maintained a clear physical and conceptual separation between paying *Kurgäste* and the local poor, thus safeguarding the commercially important image of the watering place as a haven from the importunities (ugliness, mendicants) of urban social life. They would not, however, have deterred Mrs. Trollope's social climbers.

On the other hand, one of Freud's better-known Jewish jokes—he called it the 'constitution' story—dovetails suggestively with the fate of the Robertses at Baden-Baden and can help frame the concatenation of (official and implicit) prohibitions and (licit and self-defeating) desire that animates nineteenth-century discourse on the parvenu:

An impecunious Jew [...] had stowed himself away without a ticket in the fast train to Karlsbad. He was caught, and each time tickets were inspected he was taken out and treated more and more severely. At one of the stations on his *via dolorosa* he met an

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<sup>58</sup> See Karl E. Wood, 'Spa Culture' pp. 55-59; 29; 39.

acquaintance, who asked him where he was travelling to. 'To Karlsbad', was his reply, 'if my constitution can stand it.'<sup>59</sup>

The 'constitution' story, recounted in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, is, unsurprisingly, often read with special reference to Freud's own Jewishness: he was himself treated for stomach trouble at Karlsbad; and, as John Carey relates, 'at the Bavarian resort of Thumsee in 1901 a gaggle of anti-Semites shouted abuse at [his] family and Freud charged at them with his walking stick'.<sup>60</sup> Yet the trials of Freud's Jew have broader implications in the light of the nineteenth century's broad-based dismantling of legislative and (arguably no less thorough) concerting of symbolic oppression (not to mention psychoanalysis's attention to behavioural paradox and apparently self-defeating conduct). Moreover, as Sasson's study reminds us, the archetype of the parvenu in French nineteenth-century culture is the (moneyed) Jew—another fact speaking to the apparent elective affinity between discourses on class and nationality (or 'race').

Mirroring the Robertses in their overpacked *veterino*, Freud's 'impecunious' Jew tries to smuggle himself into respectable society (represented by Karlsbad—probably the most enduringly aristocratic of Europe's spas in a nineteenth-century context) both unlawfully ('without a ticket') and precipitously ('in the fast train'). Compelled to read symbolically, we might wonder whether the two descriptors should not be taken as synonymous, with a long, self-abnegating labour of assimilation the necessary condition of 'arrival'. Conservation framed as gradualism was, after all, a constant thorn in the side of nineteenth-century emancipations. (Perhaps not incidentally, mockery of those who saw the water cure as a purgative panacea often went together with condescension for those who urged urgent social reform: as early as 1835 Nathaniel Hawthorne sketched an idea for a story caricaturing the 'the modern [American] reformer' as a man

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<sup>59</sup> Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. by James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1970) p. 227-8.

<sup>60</sup> Carey, 'Introduction' in Freud, *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. by Joyce Crick (London: Penguin, 2002), xxvi.

fixated on two topics—abolition and the water cure; James’s *The Bostonians* (1886) also collocates the two passions.<sup>61</sup>)

The Robertses’ assimilative ‘campaign’ at Baden-Baden is, apart from anything else, a constant rearguard battle against the self—one fought in the (for Frances Trollope) deluded belief that the—commercial, managerial—techniques of instrumental rationality are a match for nature. Similarly, the impecunious Jew’s desire to reach Karlsbad is a self-made threat to his ‘constitution’—that is, to the integrity of his identity. Freud’s Christological figure of the *via dolorosa* is sardonic, not only in view of the martyr’s Jewishness but also because his martyrdom, redeeming nothing, verges on masochism.

Why might legitimate culture have felt the need for such rhetorical vigilance against the parvenu—even more so, it can seem, than against working-class advancement? When Elizabeth Gaskell’s Manchester factory worker John Barton (in *Mary Barton*, published two years after *The Robertses*) comes face to face with ‘finer folk [...] than I ever thought on’, he is put in mind of Dives and Lazarus—and radicalized.<sup>62</sup> The Robertses, on the other hand, seek to emulate, not insurrect. A sympathetic explanation of Frances Trollope’s distaste for their campaign at Baden-Baden might be that, where legitimate culture has a developed and serious code of morality and behavior, it will reasonably fear the agency of ambitious intruders who, indifferent to its code and values, imitate them for material advantage. Yet Mrs. Trollope’s own preface, inveighing aesthetically against the ‘strange, and often offensive, manners [...] and absurdities’ of the English abroad, rather scuppers the idea of a Trojan horse; and the narrative that follows it is founded on a kind of hostile intersubjectivity that frequently wanders into derision (‘Let the imagination of every reader suggest the probable result of the Miss Robertses’ efforts to look the perfection of elegance’; 2; 99). In any event, the waters prove a false Mecca for the Robertses and a clarifying locus for Mrs. Trollope, a venue in which the cards are redealt 40 times

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<sup>61</sup> See Andrew Delbanco, *The Abolitionist Imagination*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). p. 24

<sup>62</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1848), 1, p. 153.

an hour (but the bank always wins) being eminently well suited for controlled narrative trials the results of which very often feel predetermined.

Conclusion  
Metacritical Reflections

Classification by subject matter—sillier still. The literature of inns, beginning with *Tom Jones* [...]¹

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¹ Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 29. Further references in parenthesis.



Why look at watering places?

E.M. Forster's objection to a criticism organized by reference to the settings of narratives is that such approaches foster dryly schematic comparison, encourage thinking in terms of '[p]rinciples and systems' (38) and, in doing so, court a failure to grasp the spirit of literary relations and affinities (which are, ultimately, matters of and for the 'human heart' (38)). Forster plots in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) a 'ramshackly [critical] course' (31), thumbing his nose not only at the putative rigour and 'objectivity' of chronologically oriented 'pseudo-scholars' but also at the narrow presumption of a criticism built around spatial themes.

A very different kind of critic, writing two years later, supplies a counter-argument. In a 1929 essay called 'The Biography of an Object' ('Biografiia veshchi'), the early Soviet playwright and avant-garde theorist Sergei Tret'iakov calls for a Copernican revolution in literary narrative that would liberate 'the object world, the world of things and processes' ('ob'ektivnyi mir, mir veshchei i protsessov') from its domination, in narratives, by 'the subjective world, the world of emotions and experiences' ('mir sub'ektivnyi, mir emotsii i perezhivanii'). The cornerstone of Tret'iakov's appeal for novels entitled *Forest, Bread, Coal and Iron* is that the life cycles of such inanimate (so to speak) focalizers offer a surer route to the truth of social relations than biography, the implicit paradigm in pre-revolutionary fiction. 'Things'—and Tret'iakov, not unproblematically, includes places in this category—display an 'extraordinary capacity to accommodate human material', while at the same time being significantly free, in their 'thingness', from the biases of bourgeois humanism (here Tret'iakov anticipates aspects of Robbe-Grillet's theory of the *nouveau roman*).<sup>2</sup>

Despite the above, I suspect that Forster would be a little more sympathetic than Tret'iakov to the critical project represented by this study—and not only because my interest in nineteenth-century resort culture might strike the latter as intolerably decadent. Attention to the tropological trends and heteromorphic transmissions that lend structure, however virtual, to the

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<sup>2</sup> See Tret'iakov. 'Biografiia veshchi', in *Literatura fakta*, ed. by Nikolai Chuzhak (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1929), pp. 66–70

nineteenth-century's watering-place text has seemed to me a rewardingly 'ramshackly' way in which to frame the relationships between literary cultures, paradigms and genres. The range of (sometimes surprising) social and creative bonds—across time, space and form—the present research has brought to light marks the shortcomings of chronological or national-literature based approaches to matters intertextual—which is by no means to say that it does not also show up the insufficiencies and pitfalls of a transnational, transtemporal angle (above all—excessive breadth of sweep).

I would venture for the foregoing chapters only the most hedged kind of claim for the 'objectivity' Tret'iakov would surely expect from a study entitled *Spa*. (Far from liberating anybody from bourgeois literary habits, I hope to have made a picture of them.) At best I provide a blurred still image, in single-point perspective, of the highly involuted complex of imaginative, commercial, ideological, mnemonic and other mechanisms by which representational codes move within and between literary cultures. Yet I hope I also give an impression—to match Forster's sense of 'all the novelists at work together in a circular room' (31)—of not just novelists but a broad range of discursive actors as the vital co-authors of a topic—the waters—in multiple respects emblematic of the syncretic narrative culture of industrial modernity.

About literary common-places and systematic thinking, Forster has a point. In the narratives of a(n increasingly global and hypermediated) culture, reaching for well-known settings is, for better or worse, a way of running a plot down tramlines. Some nineteenth-century representations of spas reflect—others instantiate—a furious dinning into the mind's eye. ('What we don't look at because we know already; or what we look at too clearly—too categorically—for the same reason', writes T.J. Clark, in another context, about seeing.)<sup>3</sup> Yet others exemplify the truth that it is the vocation of great art to make free with our mutual fund in order to enrich it—or to reveal it as impoverished.

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<sup>3</sup> Clark, *The Sight of Death* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 60.

As I suggested in my Introduction, a significant degree of conventionality is a condition of the coherent production of cultural space. Yet as I have also tried to show, writing about such conventions is not simply a matter of pointing out differences in paint-handling technique. Transnational approaches are especially helpful in demonstrating that topics are signifiers that, however similar the surface elements the texts that treat them assemble, point away from themselves in multiple directions at once. The Russian association of Baden-Baden and patriotic apostasy, the High Victorian preoccupation with lady gamblers—the disparate significances of resort culture, fostered, of course, by the ‘mixed use’ of the locus itself, help explain why the spa was rarely put to the service of anything like a coherent cosmopolitan discourse.

The great imponderable of any discussion of literature and place probably remains the question of agency and causation. To think about the making of a topic is to place under stress a venerable set of binary oppositions: making/representing, interpreting/intervening, constative/perlocutionary, poesis/mimesis. As Peter Brown has put it, ‘the representation of place in fictional mode [...] puts into play a series of possible practical interchanges between the real and the written world [...] literature and place are [...] interactive and in a state of perpetual negotiation’.<sup>4</sup> Places are not objects whose abiding qualities texts transmit or represent but can be defined in terms of a web of relations that texts help inscribe—and Baden-Baden as represented by Trollope or Turgenev is no more straightforwardly a hard social fact than Samuel Butler’s dystopia *Erewhon* (1872) is ‘just’ a fantasy.

‘Re(-)presentation’, suggesting an object re-lit, re-framed but untransfigured, has always been a somewhat faulty term for how life and the image interact. The travails of Chatwin’s Utz and the anxieties of James’s Maclanes (not to mention Eugene Pickering) call to mind Paul De Man’s observation in ‘The Resistance to Theory’ (1982) that

no one in his right mind will try and grow grapes by the luminosity  
of the word ‘day’, but it is very difficult not to conceive of the

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<sup>4</sup> Brown, ‘Introduction’ in *Literature and Place*, p.16.

pattern of one's past and future existence as in accordance with [...] spatial themes that belong to fictional narratives and not to the world [...]<sup>5</sup>

As jealously as we try to guard the frontier between fiction and life—and the intellectual and creative culture of the mid-nineteenth century can at times look like a cradle for such impulses—we also live to a significant extent off cross-border commerce.

In *Topographies* (1995), an important investigation of literary discourse as the co-creator of 'that in the name of which [it] speak[s]', J. Hillis Miller frames the relationship of text to space in both Yeatsian ('create or reveal') and Heideggerian ('admit or install') terms, before suggesting the latter's late thought as a critical windfall:

[Heidegger's] concepts of landscape as something made by man in his living on the earth, and of space not as something pre-existent, neutrally lying out there, but as something brought into existence by the building of houses, bridges and roads, could form the foundation of an interpretation of landscape in narrative.<sup>6</sup>

'[S]peech acts bring the terrain into [imaginative] existence' (5) for readers (and travellers—the two practices having much in common) just as building and dwelling re-master Euclidean space:

[N]ovels do not simply ground themselves on landscapes that are already there, made by the prior activities of building, dwelling, and thinking [a reference to the title of the 1951 essay by Heidegger upon which Miller is drawing] The writing of a novel and the reading of it, participate in these activities. Novels themselves aid in making the landscapes they apparently presuppose as already made and finished.

(16)

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<sup>5</sup> Paul de Man, 'The Resistance to Theory', in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), pp.355-71 (p.362).

<sup>6</sup> Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 16. Further references in parenthesis.

But considerable too is the power exerted by the terrain over the speech act:

[T]he landscape in a novel is not just an indifferent background against which the action takes place. The landscape is an essential determinant of that action. No account of a novel would be complete without a careful interpretation of the function of the landscape (or cityscape) within it.

(16)

Indeed, the co-creativity of the relationship between world and what Wallace Stevens liked to conceive of as the fictional ‘mundo’ is, for Miller, such as to preclude any discussion of first causes:

According to the alogic of figure and ground relations, the landscape *around, behind or beneath a novel*, must both pre-exist the novel as what is outside it, prior to it, giving it solidity, and be incorporated within it. The landscape exists as landscape only when it has been made human in an activity of inhabitation that the writing of the novel repeats or prolongs. Causer and caused, first and second, change places in a *perpetually reversing metalepsis*.

(21)

Metalepsis, previously a somewhat obscure rhetorical trope, was re-defined for narratology by Gérard Genette (in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay on Method*) as ‘any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe [...] or the inverse’.<sup>7</sup> Where other students of Genette’s theory, such as Debra Malina, have conceived of metalepsis as an ‘art’ whose ‘diverse and deft practitioners’ deploy the ‘jarring’ effect of such transgressions in order to ‘dramatize [...] the problematization of the boundary between fiction and reality endemic to the postmodern condition’, Miller makes metaleptic activity a concomitant of any representational praxis—and thus of living in the world.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay on Method*, trans. by Jane Lewin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 234–35.

<sup>8</sup> See Malina, *Breaking the Frame: Metalepsis and the Construction of the Subject* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), pp. 1-2.

What, then, is the fate of a topic? One answer—which will have to suffice for the present—might be that it is to open up what the postmodern geographer and theorist Edward Soja thinks of as ‘thirdspace’—territory neither ‘material (conceived)’ nor ‘mental (perceived)’, but invented ‘through constant and reiterative practice’; that is, through endless adumbrations on an identifiable topo-graphical theme: London, Paris, the colonies, the sea, the spa.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (London: Blackwell, 2004), p. 38. See also Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1996).

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